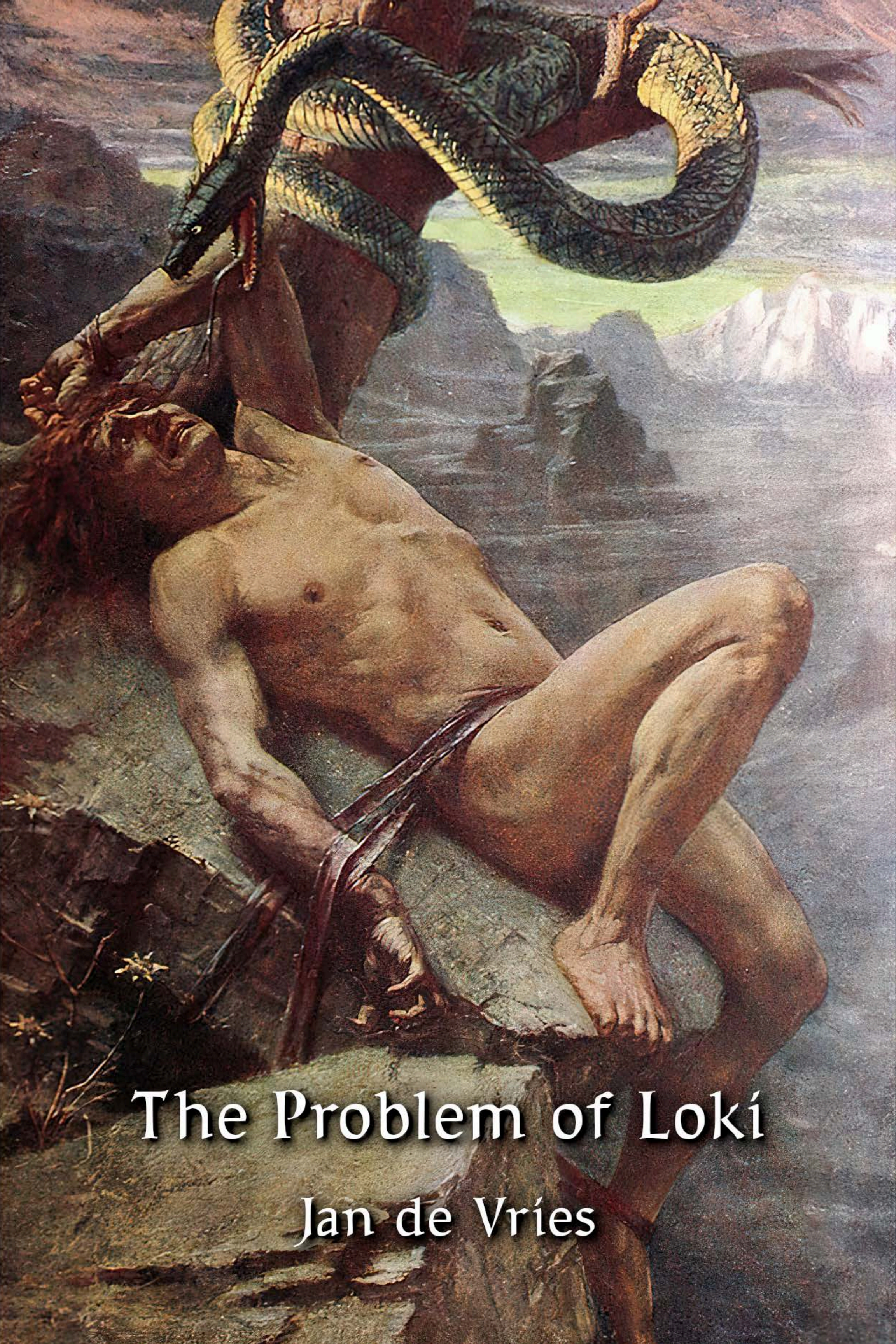

The Problem of Loki

Jan de Vries

THE PROBLEM OF LOKI

BY

JAN DE VRIES

HERITAGE

PRINTED BY
SUOMALAISEN KIRJALLISUUDEN SEURAN KIRJAPAINON O.Y.
HELSINKI 1933

CHAPTER I

METHODOLOGICAL PROLEGOMENA

nil tam difficile est,
quin quaerendo investigari possit.

In beginning the investigation of one of the most difficult problems of Germanic mythology it will be wise to take into consideration the preliminary question as to how such a study should be carried on. As far as we are concerned with literary sources — and most of our material happily consists in poems and prose tales belonging to the Old-Norse literature — a sound philological method will be the only advisable way to arrive at any valuable conclusion. But often this does not carry us very far, because our knowledge of the literary monuments of the different myths of Loki is very fragmentary and in a great many cases these are themselves in need of further elucidation; by following only the light, which they are able to give, we keep on groping in the dark. Scholars have therefore tried to collect more material from other fields of study as well: it is mainly etymology, popular lore and ethnology that have furnished hitherto the most valuable results for the study of the character of Loki.

The meaning of the name of a god is of course a point of no slight importance, when we wish to grasp the original idea of the deity. The experience, however, gathered by the consideration of so many sagacious attempts to explain the character of a god by an interpretation of his name, may make us cautious and even sceptical. The divine names are commonly very obscure, whether it be because they belong to a period of the language, which lies so far back, that etymology is no longer a safe guide, or because of the influence of those curious customs in the sphere of religious thinking, well known to scholars of ethnology as »taboo» and »noa». The explanation of such a name is therefore in most cases nothing but loose guess-work. Even in the rare cases, in which the etymology of a divine name is fairly certain, we should not think that the problem has been solved; the name, indeed, may belong to a very remote period and then the data furnished by later phases of evolution do not in the least agree with the character of the god revealed by his name. The name, however, may be late as well and then it only serves to elucidate a definite period in the development of the ideas about the deity, or it only reflects a peculiar side of people's impressions of him; then an etymology, that in itself may be unimpeachable, still leads us astray, because we get a one-sided idea instead of a right understanding of all his different qualities. Etymology is not a basis to start from, but it may be a welcome confirmation of results arrived at by other methods of investigation. The resemblance of the name Loki and the Old-Norse word *logi* »fire» has induced many scholars to consider him as a fire-demon, an opinion which is even now still generally accepted. But if we try to explain the different myths of Loki by this assumption, we have in fact settled the question of their meaning before examining it; a warning example is Elard Hugo Meyer, who in his book on the »Mythologie der Germanen» rejects the connection between Loki and Othin and on the other hand accepts the myths, where Loki is the companion of Thor, only because he has identified Loki and *logi* and therefore considers him to be »fire» in its movability and noxiousness [1].

---

[1] L. c. p. 276 sqq.

The scanty information, furnished by the old literary monuments, seems to gain valuable completion by the material of modern popular lore. To make serious objections to this method of studying problems in the field of religious phenomena, may seem to be a proof of unwarranted hypercriticism, especially now-a-days, when it is so generally accepted. Still I wish to maintain my objections to it, which I have more fully developed in a paper on »Die Bedeutung der Volkskunde für mythologische und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen» published in the Germanisch-Romanische Monatschrift (XX, p. 27—39). I may refer the reader to my discussion in this article. Moreover I have urged the same opinion in my »Contributions to the Study of Othin especially in his relation to agricultural practices in modern popular lore», published in the FFCommunications № 94; here I had the opportunity to show that the character of a god, as it appears in the popular tradition of modern times may be entirely different from the original meaning of the deity in the heathen period. On the other hand I have also endeavoured to show the strong difference between an old religious conception and modern popular representations in an article »Van Alven en Elfen», that appeared in the Nederlandsch Tijdschrift voor Volkskunde [1]. So I do not consider it necessary to repeat my objections to a method, which, tempting as it may be in cases where genuine heathen tradition is too fragmentary or too obscure to render us valuable material for our investigation, still is highly questionable when we want to understand the meaning of a religious phenomenon in its original form. The present study will supply fresh evidence for my opinion.

---

[1] Ibid. XXXVI, p. 3—30. Cf also my articles »Het huidige bijgeloof als bron voor de kennis van den heidenschen godsdienst der Germanen» in the same periodical XXXVII p. 25—35 and »Volkskunde en Volkenkunde als hulpwetenschappen der godsdienstgeschiedenis in the Dutch periodical Mensch en Maatschappij VIII (1932) p. 452—464.

If we consider a religious phenomenon as a part of a definite system of belief, it may often seem very difficult to understand its meaning as a particular form of the religious representations: a comparison with corresponding phenomena among other peoples may in such a case offer valuable suggestions for its understanding. These peoples may live in a more or less close neighbourhood, or their civilisation may be supposed to have exerted a certain influence upon the tribe whose religious belief we are studying; in this case the idea easily presents itself, that a resemblance between the religious representations must be attributed to the fact that one borrowed from the other. If, on the contrary, the peoples belong to quite distinct geographical and cultural spheres, we must conclude that corresponding religious forms are the result of corresponding religious representations.

In the latter case it may appear that we have the opportunity to penetrate into the core of a religious phenomenon, because it now seems free from all secondary local and temporal accretions and accessible to an inquiry into its real character. Since I shall avail myself of the opportunity to explain the meaning of Loki by adducing fresh evidence from so-called primitive peoples, I can not but approve of this method. I wish, however, to emphasize the danger which lies in such a comparison. A religious phenomenon is the outcome of a very complicated development; it is intimately connected with the way of thinking and feeling of man and dependant upon the special cultural sphere, in which it has grown up. So there may even be a strong resemblance in outward form and nonetheless a striking difference in the real religious meaning between the corresponding representations of two peoples. There is moreover the possibility that, by such a comparison with the beliefs of primitive peoples, we reduce the importance of a religious representation of a higher cultural level to its minimum, that is to the simple ideas that underlie the later development. Things may seem to be the same and really be quite different. Lastly we must bear in mind, that the material of the so-called primitives must be used with extreme caution, as it is not always collected in a sufficiently scientific and trustworthy manner. The critical evaluation of the sources must precede their use, but it is not always possible to do so when we enter on a field of scientific research as mere visitors. We had better stay within our own frontiers. A religious phenomenon can only be rightly understood, if we are able to consider it as part and parcel of the whole system of belief; but when we use the material of primitive peoples for the elucidation of a religious phenomenon of a higher order, we run the risk of detaching it from its basis and of considering it as a phenomenon, independant of time and space.

The danger of misinterpretation seems much less if we confine ourselves to the comparison with the beliefs of peoples, who belong to the same linguistic group or stand on the same cultural level. Old-Norse mythology is naturally connected with the beliefs of other Indo-European peoples; the highly developed mythologies of the Aryans, the Greeks and the Romans may yield many valuable suggestions for explanation. If, however, we find common ideas in these religions, how must we consider them? As a proof of the common stock of religious representations lying at the bottom of the different mythologies that developed quite independantly? Or as the result of mutual borrowing, in which case the Old-Norse tradition as the later one is likely to be considered as the debtor to the other Aryan religions?

It is a well-known fact that after the highly conjectural hypotheses which the age of Romanticism built in the field of Germanic and Aryan mythology, a reaction has taken place tending to explain congruities between the religious representations of kindred peoples as borrowings by the lower civilised from the more advanced. It is a fact, that by some peoples a great cultural influence has been exerted on their neighbours. But on the whole we must insist upon the necessity of a protracted and intimate connection by such peoples to allow religious beliefs and customs to wander from one country to an other. I think it important to enphasize this point, since several scholars have tried to explain various peculiarities in the myths of Loki by such farreaching influences, As for the rôle of Christianity in the development of the Old-Norse mythology, it can not be denied of course that a considerable part of the myths we know of have been created or at any rate have acquired their literary form during the period when the Scandinavian peoples were deeply impressed by Christian ideas. Still we ought to be cautious not to overestimate this influence and to keep in mind the possibility that a myth in its appearance may be altogether Christian and nonetheless have a quite heathen origin.

If we suppose an Old-Norse myth to be related to traditions of peoples living at a great distance from Scandinavia, e.g. to those of Asia Minor, we must not content ourselves by pointing out a series of similarities, however convincing they may seem to be, but we are obliged to indicate the way by which the myth has travelled and the circumstances which make such a transmission plausible. Casual merchants or vikings, going to and fro between distant countries can not be made responsible for the transplantation of a myth, unless it is nothing but a curious tale dressed up in the hieratic robes of a full-blown myth. For in this case the myth belongs exclusively to the domain of literature and has to be studied as any other popular tale [1].

---

[1] I do not intend to deny the literary character of autochthonic

The myths of Loki are, to be sure, for a considerable part, of this latter kind. This circumstance makes it rather easy to arrive at a conclusion, for by the method of the modern study of popular traditions we may be able to point out the dependance of such an Old-Norse myth upon a widely spread folk-tale. On the other hand this character of the majority of the traditions about Loki hampers the right understanding of the deity himself, because most of our material proves to be of no use for the study of the religious value of Loki. Hence we must not be too radical in cutting away from the bulk of traditions all those tales which are under the suspicion of being only adaptations of ordinary folk-tales; otherwise at the end of our work the result may be that of the swollen stream of Loki myths a dry bed is the only trace left.

Our task will be a critical survey of all the available material and as this belongs exclusively to Scandinavian literature, we must begin with a philological investigation. A folkloristic study comes next to separate the chaff from the wheat. If possible we will make a distinction between the later and the earlier strata of the tradition, to guard against mixing up the representations of different ages. It should not be our principal aim to find the oldest form of the Loki-mythology, but to arrive at a coherent and intelligible group of myths, by which we are able to understand the meaning of Loki in a definite period. However tempting the construction of an evolutionary scheme may be, we must always remember that a religious phenomenon is not sufficiently explained when we know where it came from, but only when we understand what it really is.

---

mythological tales as well — *Haggarty Krappe*, The Science of Folklore p. 317—318 has rightly insisted upon it — but here we have always to reckon with the possibility that there is an underlying basis of actual belief.

CHAPTER II

CRITICAL SURVEY OF THE EXTANT THEORIES

In his monumental work on Teutonic mythology *Jacob Grimm*[1] has first pointed out the close affinity of the words *Logi* and *Loki* which he can not accept to be fortuitous: while Logi is »fire» conceived as a natural force, Loki represents a more advanced stage of this idea and may be compared at the same time with the Greek deities Prometheus and Hephaistos. If he has been known once in Germany no traces of him are now left; in Scandinavia however several popular traditions about a demon Loki or Lokke are still in existence. Furthermore Grimm considers the possibility of the word Loki, which indeed was originally a form of Logi altered according to the German soundshifting[2], being brought into connection with the root *lûkan* »claudere»; then the name of this god got the meaning of »the closer» and he may be compared with the anglosaxon demon Grendel and the German word *höllriegel.* Such a confusion of mythical notions is a proof of the high antiquity of the development of Logi to Loki.

This theory has been subsequently accepted by a great number of scholars, who only slightly modified or else more clearly formulated the rather hazy conceptions of Grimm. The Danish scholar *N. M. Petersen* expresses as his view that Loki is a fire-god, and he adds, that he belongs to heaven by his affinity with Othin, to earth as a Fenrisulfr and to the underworld as the fettered demon[1]. Less homogeneous is the conception of *Th. Wisén*[2], who accepts the explanation of Loki as a fire-god, as far as the name is concerned; he was once the same as Logi, but since these religious personalities were separated, his name had to undergo a slight alteration. So the form Loki is, according to Wisén, due to a deliberate changing of the name! From the Old-Norse poems other qualities of this god may be concluded: he is a deity of the water, because Fenrir seems to be connected with the word *fen* »moor»; he is also a god of the air, as is proved by his surname Loptr and a couple of mythological features. The study of Wisén is of course quite antiquated, in method as well as in results, but there is one observation that in course of time proved to be very useful for further investigation: in popular tradition an older form of this deity may have been preserved than in the Eddic poems of the last period.

---

[1] Deutsche Mythologie, 4th edition, I, p. 199 sqq.

[2] Grimm says not quite clearly: das im Laut fortgeschobne Loki.

The resemblance between Loki and Prometheus, which indeed can not be denied, was mostly considered to be a proof of his character as a firegod, even going back to the Aryan period. The sagacious Swedish scholar *V. Rydberg* argued in the same way, considering him only more particularly to be connected with the heavenly fire, the lightning; this seems to be shown by the etymological meaning of the names Byleistr and Fårbauti both parents of Loki[3]. The more specialised idea of Loki as a demon of the lightning seemed to be generally accepted. *R. Much* called to mind his connection with Thor in a great many mythological tales, but at the same time drew our attention to his character of heavenly smith, by which his relation to Velend and Vaði seemed to gain a plausible explanation [1]. As to the name, he rejects the connection with Logi as well as Bugge's theory about its being derived from the word Lucifer; he thinks it worth consideration that Loki may correspond with ags *loca* »prison», and ventures to conclude that he is the representative of the realm of death as he was the first and the most prominent one to be cast into it. One should imagine that he would accept the hypothesis of *S. Bugge*, that Loki was a northern development of the Christian devil, but he shrinks from doing so, and is even of opinion that this may be the result of an independant evolution of the Teutonic myth.

---

[1] Nordisk Mytologi (Swedish translation), 1869, p. 309.

[2] Oden och Loke (1873) p. 62 sqq.

[3] Undersökningar i Germanisk Mythologi (1886) I, p. 450 sqq; Byleistr is explained with the help of the words *bylr* »whirlwind» and *eistr* »who lives in the East». Fàrbauti means »who strikes people with perdition».

Much rejects emphatically the confused explanation given by *E. Mogk* [2], whose theory I will treat further on. The handbooks of *P. Herrmann* and *E. H. Meyer*, published in the same year, 1903, do not bring us any farther; the former repeats the conception of Loki as a fire-demon, as proved by his name, his mythological relatives, his art of forging and popular tradition; he adds moreover that he became in course of time more ethically determined, without however adducing any evidence for the reasons of this curious development [3]. Still more confused is the opinion of E. H. Meyer [4], who starting from the conception of Loki as a fire-god, makes this very puzzling definition: Loki is the lightning, then also the heat of summer and the air vibrating on a hot summer-day, furthermore the fire on the hearth and lastly the vulcanic earth-fire. It need not be said that such constructions, emanating from the writingdesk, are of no value whatever, since they do not take into consideration the actual religious representations of the heathen Skandinavians. The German scholar *R. M. Meyer* is also of opinion that Loki simply is a god of fire and explains by the double character of this element the contradictions in his attitude towards the gods.[1]

---

[1] Der germanische Himmelsgott (Festschrift Paul, 1898) p. 48 sqq.

[2] In his treatment of the Germanic mythology in Paul's Grundriss der germanischen Philologie, repeated in the second edition (1900) III, p. 347.

[3] Nordische Mythologie, p. 403 sqq.

[4] Germanische Mythologie p. 275 sq.

In the definition of E. H. Meyer we find the different aspects of Loki awkwardly combined, as he appears in Old-Norse mythology and in modern popular lore. In fact this deity shows so many different features, that it seems impossible to unite them into one single original idea. So gradually it became clear, that Loki's character, as it is shown by Eddic and Skaldic poetry, is the result of a long and complicated evolution, influenced by distinct religious representations; consequently it may be possible too that different mythical beings have coalesced into the incongruous figure of Loki. The fire-god is then only one of its aspects, predominating or less important according to the fancy of the scholars. Since the strong resemblance between him and Prometheus remains an undeniable fact, there is always a strong tendency to explain this likeness by the theory of an Aryan fire-deity. So *G. Wilke* combines the Scandinavian Loki with the fire god whom Caesar mentions as one of the chief-deities of the Germanic tribes and considers the corresponding gods Loki, Prometheus, Vulcan and Agni-Mātariçvan as proof of the existence of a common Indo-European fire-god.[2]

The etymology, that explains the name Loki by a verbal root of the meaning »to close», has since J. Grimm become the basis of a second hypothesis about the original meaning of this god. We find it fully developed in *Golther*'s handbook[3] who explains him as »the closing god, the god who causes the world's end». His development is considered, clearly in accordance with S. Bugge's views, as due to the influence of the Christian Lucifer. The character of a fire-god is to be attributed to the fact, that a fire-demon Logi has been fused with Loki, not only because there is a strong resemblance between the names, but also because the world is finally destroyed by fire.[1] Still more abstract is the explanation given by *E. Mogk*[2], who maintains the etymology of Loki by means of the verb *lukan*, but translates it as the »god who makes an end to the agreeable and to the disagreeable» and consequently the friend as well as the foe of the gods. It is in fact not difficult to adduce examples of Loki's ambivalent character from the Old-Norse mythology; it is, however, a rash conclusion to say: »This only possible etymology of the word shows, that Loki belongs to a late period of the creation of myths, to a time when abstract ideas were drawn into the sphere of mythological poetry and further developed.» We might be astonished at finding such a lack of understanding with regard to religious phenomena in a scholar, who professes to give a treatment of the mythology of the Teutons, if we did not remember that the problems of Germanic religion were mostly considered as belonging to the field of philology and accordingly that a Skandinavian myth had to be explained as any other product of poetic fancy. So it is quite intelligible that a scholar like *Chantepie de la Saussaye* should hesitate before such a conclusion, but although he rejects the explanation of Loki as a fire-god and at the same time as a »closer» [1], he does not give any better hypothesis in its stead. He contents himself with quoting Mogk's definition: »the true impersonation of a *thulr* who takes delight in snapping his fingers at the company round about him, but who always knows how to escape the net that is spread for him». But this applies only to the last stage of the development of the god, more particularly of Loki as he appears in a couple of Scandinavian myths and in the Lokasenna.

---

[1] Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte (Leipzig 1910) p. 337.

[2] Die Religion der Indogermanen in archäologischer Beleuchtung (Mannus-Bibliothek Nr. XXXI) p. 119.

[3] Handbuch der germanischen Mythologie (1895) p. 406 sqq.

---

[1] As a curious example of the philosophical constructions of German mythologists this sentence of Golther deserves to be quoted in its original form: Ein Dämon des Feuers, welcher auch sonst unter dem Namen Logi, die persönlich gewordene Lohe vorkommt, scheint vielleicht wegen des anklingenden Namens und, da ja wirklich die Welt im Feuer endigt (*logi* — *loki* : Lohe — Endiger), mit Loki verschmolzen zu sein.

[2] In the Grundriss III, p. 347. Many years later Mogk abandoned this theory and accepted the explanation of Loki as a fire-demon (Feueralf). Cf. his article in Hoops's Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde III, p. 162 sqq. He concludes with the prudent remark: In the poetry about Loki nothing of a unity is to be seen and consequently it is impossible to point out one single fundamental trait in his appearance (. . . und daher lässt sich auch im Wesen der Erscheinung kein einheitlicher Grundton festlegen).

The same opinion slightly modified is enunciated by *F. Jónsson* [2], who accepts the explanation of the name as »the closer» and considers him as belonging to the giants and consequently elected to do all possible mischief in the world. That is the reason why he entices Othin to engage in a bond of bloodfraternity and why he seduces the goddesses to adultery. He is the personification of all that is bad and devilish. He has nothing whatever to do with nature nor with fire. As we might expect from a scholar like F. Jónsson, this theory is clear and decisive, but it is not quite in accordance with the facts, presented by the tradition, nor does it take into consideration the possibility that the figure of Loki also belongs to the domain of religious belief.

The view of *O. Schoning* [3], that Loki on the ground of his connection with Hel, has been originally a god of the dead, has not found many adherents. The Swedish scholar *H. Schück*[1] considers him also as a chthonic god, a lord of the realm of death, an opinion which he afterwards under the impression of Axel Olrik's investigations modified in this way by explaining the Icelandic Loki as a combination of an original death-god and a servant of the thundergod. I did not find any further indication about the way in which this curious religious development might have taken place.[2]

---

[1] The Religion of the Teutons (1902) p. 260 sqq.

[2] Goðafræði Norðmanna og Íslendinga eftir heimildum (Reykjavík 1913) p. 96.

[3] Dødsriger i nordisk hedentro (Copenhagen 1903). Loki's eating contest with Logi in the hall of Utgarðaloki is adduced as a proof for his being a devourer of corpses!

Deities of death usually show some connection with the conceptions of fertility: so, if it were well established that Loki originally belongs to the realm of the dead, we might expect to find some traces of his character as a god of vegetation. *F. R. Schröder* advocates this opinion in his treatment of the Germanic religion in Clemen's handbook »Die Religionen der Erde»[3], but as he only expresses it hesitatingly and adduces no proofs for his view, we are unable to criticise its value.

The resemblance between Loki and Prometheus was explained by the scholars as a proof of their both being fire-gods; but there was still an other way of understanding the remarkable fact that two supernatural beings, although belonging to quite distinct mythological systems and in fact showing several important differences, nonetheless in some respects appear in the same functions. They are both typical forms of the culture-hero. To this side of their character the eyes of scholars were first opened when ethnology had collected material enough to give an idea of the primitive forms of this well-nigh universally known religious conception. It was an ethnologist who first pointed out the strong resemblance between Loki and the culture-hero of the Algonquin tribes, but *Leland* made the absurd conclusion that this was due to the cultural influence of the Norsemen upon the North-American Indians.[1] This observation remained unknown to the European scholars, who studied Germanic mythology; not until a quarter of a century later did *F. von der Leyen* explain the curious myths of Loki by his fundamental character of a culture-hero.[2] He was originally a real benefactor of gods and men; he played his tricks only to obtain all kinds of indispensable things from malevolent demoniac beings. In course of time Loki was confused with the Christian devil; in Iceland, and only there, was he mixed up with a fire-demon Logi. From Old-Norse literature we get a wrong impression of this god, for the poets have changed him into the unrelenting foe of the cosmic order.

---

[1] Studier i Nordisk Litteratur- och Religionshistoria II, p. 125.

[2] In Schück-Warburg, Illustrerad Svensk Litteraturhistoria (3d edition) I, p. 159.

[3] He speaks about Loki in one single sentence that runs as follows: »So dürfte ein Wachstumsgott ursprünglich auch Loke gewesen sein, der in seiner späteren Entwicklung vielleicht einzelne Züge des christlichen Teufels angenommen hat . . .».

This keen understanding of the puzzling problem of Loki has not had the effect it deserved. It has, of course, not been denied that Loki in some myths plays the rôle of the culture-hero, but this character has not been considered as essentially his own. Starting from the opinion that Loki, as he appears in the Old-Norse myths is a very complicated being, the type of the culture-hero was allowed to explain one side of his multivarious character. *Axel Olrik* [3], who accepts v. d. Leyen's explanation, agrees to this as does also *Mac Culloch*, who however emphasizes more strongly the character of the mischief-maker, often the concomitant feature of the culture-hero.[1] Since I intend to discuss this hypothesis in the course of this paper at full length, I will here refrain from further argument.

---

[1] *C. G. Leland*, The Algonquin Legends of New England or Myths and Folk-Lore of the Micmac, Passamaquoddy and Penobscot Tribes (London 1884). The resemblance between Loki and the culture-hero of the Algonquins has also been observed by Mrs E. R. Emerson, Indian Myths (Boston 1884) p. 361—3.

[2] Die Götter und Göttersagen der Germanen (Deutsches Sagenbuch I, München 1909) p. 222 sq.

[3] In his paper »Myterne om Loke» in Festskrift Feilberg p. 573 sqq.

Hitherto the books, we have taken into consideration, have been for the most part general surveys of Germanic or Scandinavian mythology; now we must turn to the most valuable of the scientific literature about Loki, those papers which deal exclusively with this deity. Here we shall meet the names of *Axel Olrik* and *Hilding Celander*. Olrik began his investigations with several smaller articles in the periodical »Danske Studier». In 1905 he published a paper entitled »Tordenguden og hans dreng»[2] in which he compared an Esthonian myth of the son of the thundergod with the Eddic poems Hymiskviða and Þrymskviða; he concludes that Loki has been the son or the servant of the thundergod and that he may be consequently compared with the figure of Þjálfi in Scandinavian mythology. He tries to explain the fact that the same religious conception is represented by two different mythological beings in this way that they belong to different geographical areas, Þjálfi belonging especially to the Swedish people, Loki as the thunderer's son to the countries lying east of the Baltic sea. The value of the Esthonian material will be discussed later on; it may suffice here to draw attention to the great improbability of Olrik's conclusion: in fact considering the relations of the Swedes with Finland and Esthonia in heathen times, we might expect that in these latter countries Swedish religious ideas would prevail. According to Olrik the contrary is the case; in these regions we not only find a different type of this servant of the thundergod, but moreover traces of him are rather unexpectedly left in the West-Scandinavian mythological traditions.

---

[1] Eddic Mythology (Boston 1930) p. 149.

[2] Ibid. p. 129—146.

Olrik, however, was convinced that he had taken hold of one thread of the intricate tissue of Loki myths. The next step was taken, as might be expected from a scholar like him, on the field of popular tradition. »Loki i nyere folkeoverlevering» is the title of a couple of articles, published in 1908 and 1909, where he collects all the available material from the Faroes, the Shetland-Islands, Denmark, Sweden and Norway.[1] He arrives at the conclusion that according to popular lore Loki is a small goblin, mainly connected with fire and other related phenomena, whose character of liar, trickster and thief well agrees with the image the Old-Norse literature draws of him.

The popular traditions were studied meanwhile by the Swedish folklorist *Hilding Celander*, who criticized in many respects the conclusions of Olrik[2] and then presented as his own opinion, that Loki was originally a spirit, of the kind Scandinavian peoples call *bergmand*, *nisse* or *vätte*, and that he was intimately connected with the veneration of the dead. Of course he finds in the literary tradition many details, which may be used as proof of his theory; on the other hand there are also several myths that do not agree at all; they are to be explained by secondary influences. These are partly nothing but ordinary motives of folk-tales (such as the myths of Iðunn, Þjazi and Skaði), they are due partly to traditions about the fettered demon, the importance of which had been pointed out by Axel Olrik in two brilliant studies about the myth of Ragnarok.[3] The connection of Loki with Hel and the myth of his being bound by the gods are explained in the latter way. The view, that Loki was a culture-hero is rejected on the consideration that he never properly steals cultural goods.[1] The curious myth of the close connection between Othin and Loki is shortly dismissed by the observation that they both belong to the realm of death. In his opinion Loki has lost most of his importance in the myths we are acquainted with. So he thinks it possible that a considerable time before the tenth century the development of an elf-like spirit into a god-like being, comparable with the highest of the gods, had taken place, and that the Old-Norse myths show only the corrupted and obliterated features of this deity, while on the other hand more than ten centuries later we find in popular lore the traces of the original spirit, which the heathen Scandinavians themselves have probably no longer known. The study of Celander is valuable as a careful collection of folkloristic material, but his method is insufficiant for the study of a complicated religious phenomenon as Loki. I shall have the opportunity to discuss the conclusions of Celander, when I myself study the modern traditions about Loki. Here it may suffice to quote the criticism of Neckel, who judiciously remarks that Celander treats an ideal form of Loki, which never has existed anywhere but in the brains of the ancient and the modern mythologists.[2] The positive value of Celander's book is in fact small; of more importance is his rejection of Olrik's conclusions, which holds good even against the new and detailed investigation, this Danish scholar soon afterwards published.

---

[1] Danske Studier 1908, p. 193—207 and 1909, p. 69—84.

[2] Lokes mytiska ursprung in Språkvetenskapliga Sällskapets i Uppsala förhandlingar 1906—1909 (Uppsala 1911) p. 18—140.

[3] Om Ragnarok in the Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie 1902 p. 157—291 and Ragnarokforestillingernes Udspring in Danske Studier 1913, p. 1—283.

This study »Myterne om Loke», which forms one of the most brilliant contributions to the »Festskrift Feilberg», makes a distinction between different mythical beings, that have subsequently coalesced into Loki. The Scandinavian myths show us on the one hand a Loki in close connection with Othin, on the other hand a second Loki always combined with Thor. The latter belongs mainly to the Eastern, the former to the Western parts of the Scandinavian territory. The malevolent Loki, although showing some traits in common with both the Othin-Loki and the Thor-Loki, is created among the Goths in the Migration-period and came thence to the Northern peoples. Finally we have to consider the type of the culture-hero, probably the oldest feature of Loki; by means of a rather subjective reasoning he finds traces of this being in the Rhine-tracts as early as the first centuries of our era. For the Loki of modern popular belief there seems to be hardly any place in the evolutionary scheme of Olrik; he contends however that this Loki belongs to an old conception and may be traceable in his smallness and the trickster-qualities of the Eddic Loki. The hypothesis seems to me not less of a highly constructive character than those condemned by Olrik as being the outcome of an a priori argument; it is, moreover, very complicated and I consider it to be a serious shortcoming, that we must accept several independant mythological conceptions at the base of an evolution, and that we do not understand the reason, why these different features in course of time have been united in the god, the Old-Norse traditions trace for us.

---

[1] L. c. p. 116 and later again Danske Studier 1914 p. 84.

[2] Anzeiger für deutsches Altertum XXXVI (1913) p. 135—139.

In 1931 a new discussion of the Loki-problem has been the subject of a Dutch dissertation. As the author, Miss *E. J. Gras*, already clearly avows by the title of her book, she intends to give only an account of the Old-Norse myths and their mutual relationship.[1] Her conclusion is the following: the tales about the devilish Loki are of no value for understanding his original character. The other myths are so encumbered with folkloristic motives, that it is very difficult to use them for the study of this religious phenomenon; still it appears that he was considered to be a cunning demon and a trickster. His connection with Othin must be very old; his relation to Thor, however, is due to a literary creation; so she does not adhere to Olrik's theory about a Loki as the servant of the thundergod. He has no connection at all with the element of »fire»; there is more evidence for his relation to water. Here Miss Gras adduces the testimony of the Dutch water-spirit »Kludde» or »Lodder», already observed by Olrik[1] and consequently considers him to be a mythological being, belonging to the West-Germanic tribes as well as to the Scandinavians. The inscription on the brooch of Nordendorf, where we read the word *Logaþore* is adduced as fresh evidence for his existence in Germany. From what follows it will be shown that I think these conclusions unacceptable, but the detailed and thorough discussion of the Old-Norse myths is a valuable piece of work, that will free me from the necessity of treating them at full length since I am able to refer the reader to this book.

---

[1] De Noordse Loki-mythen in hun onderling verband (Haarlem 1931).

---

[1] *Grüner-Nielsen* and *Olrik*, Loeke, Lodder i flamsk folketro in Danske Studier 1912 p. 87—90.

CHAPTER III

CHRONOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE SOURCES

Besides the modern popular tradition the main sources for the myths of Loki are literary monuments, belonging to the Old-Norse literature. As early as the beginning of the tenth century we find traces of a fully developed mythology of Loki in the poems of Þjóðólfr ór Hvini; by his poetical metaphors in Ynglingatal and still more extensively in the Haustlǫng, where the skald describes a shield, on which several myths were painted, Þjóðólfr furnishes us with valuable material for the knowledge of the figure of Loki in those days. Since this poet is a Norwegian, the image he draws of Loki is not properly Icelandic, but must be attributed to the original tradition of Norway. Although some influence of the Christian belief is not improbable, on the other hand we may assume that the Norwegians about the year 900 were still on the whole heathen and the time seems to be insufficiant for such a deeplying influence of Christian ideas and legends to have altered the pagan myths.

In the latter half of the same century lived the Icelandic skald Úlfr Uggason, who composed the famous Húsdrápa about the beautiful hall, newly erected by Óláfr pái at Hjarðarholt and especially about the woodcarvings that covered its walls. According to this poem the artist had chosen mythological themes and that is the reason why Úlfr tells about the fight between Heimdallr and Loki, the conflict between Thor and the Midgardserpent and the myth of Balder. In this case evidence of Christian influence may be safely accepted, at all events with regard to the builder of the house and his family; this does not imply however, that these myths must have necessarily contained Christian elements, for when an artist makes a representation of a tale, he of course supposes the contents to be generally known. He can not carve out on the walls every detail of the myth, but he must select those that are of the highest importance and are at the same time sufficient to express the proper meaning of what he wants to represent. I think it improbable that the myths, carved on Óláfr's hall were new-fangled; on the contrary they reflected the popular tradition, current in his time. Moreover, if we are to rely on the testimony of this fragmentary poem, we must conclude that the choice of these myths was not fortuitous; they were for one reason or another considered to be of such an importance that Óláfr wished to have them carved on the walls. The conclusion must be: these myths were well-known and even belonged to the common stock of these religious traditions, or else Óláfr pái had some particular reason for choosing them to the exclusion of others, in which case we must try to find the peculiar element, that united them in the predilection of Óláfr.

About the year 1000 the Icelandic poet Eilífr Goðrúnarson composed a poem about Thor's journey to Geirrøðr. Since it originated in a time that Christian influence had become allpervading in Iceland and the skald himself some years afterwards was converted, direct or indirect connection with Christian legends or at any rate a free handling of a myth that belonged to the realm of literature, and no more to that of real belief, may be easily accepted.

Besides an occasional kenning in a skaldic poem, these are the principal testimonies for the myths of Loki afforded by the skalds. More material is to be found in the Eddic poems, but here we meet with the difficulty, that these monuments can not be dated with any certainty. Centuries may lie between different poems of the same Edda-collection. I think we may safely contend, that Hymiskviða and parts of Hyndluljóð belong to the tenth century, that the Vǫluspá was composed in the period of transition from heathen to Christian belief, i. e. about the year 1000; that furthermore the Lokasenna has originated in a time when the heathen myths were still well-known, although the veneration for the ancient gods was nearly gone, and that this poem consequently was composed in the first half of the 11th century. As to the Þrymskviða opinions are very much divided, some dating it rather early and at any rate in the heathen period, others considering it on the contrary a creation of later extraction. I have given my reasons elsewhere[1], why I accept the latter view and I will accordingly treat this poem as a testimony from the end of the 12th century; still I will take into consideration the possibility of its belonging to the oldest layer of Eddic poems as well.

Finally an abundant harvest may be gleaned in the last period of the classical Old-Norse literature, i. e. in the beginning of the 13th century. Very important is the information given by Snorri Sturluson in his socalled Edda, because he not only completes the often very fragmentary and obscure renderings of the skalds, but also furnishes us with fresh evidence by giving the contents of otherwise unknown myths. It has often been said and it need not be repeated, that we must handle this material with the utmost caution. Snorri himself is of course a Christian and the myths handed down to him, have lived about two centuries in the memory of a thoroughly Christianized people. The proper meaning of the myth may have been obliterated, its contents modified, the details misunderstood and confused. Moreover, since the poets remained in the habit of using mythological names for their »kennings» the act of myth-making survived even in the Christian period and so it is not impossible, that new myths, products of a queer antiquated literature, evolved. Finally Snorri himself is too great an artist to leave the raw material, he succeeded in collecting, quite intact; on the contrary, we could expect him to join the »disjecta membra» of a tale together and still suspect that he did not always catch the right meaning of the original. He may even have had its own ideas about how it should have been and consequently have remodelled the myths according to his own opinion. At any rate, the explanation offered by Snorri must be accepted with reserve; the combination of several myths must be investigated with a very critical eye, but the myths themselves may be accepted as having been current in the same form as he relates them.

---

[1] »Over de dateering der Þrymskviða» in het Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsche Taal- en Letterkunde XLVII (1928) p. 251—322.

Still later is the Sǫrla þáttr; it belongs to a highly epigonic age. The myth of the stealing of the Brísingamen, told by an author, who only wishes to delect his readers, deserves but slight belief, and scholars, who utterly disagree on most parts of the Loki-problem, are in perfect harmony about the untrustworthiness of this document.

With the Faroese ballads »Lokka táttur» and »Risin og Lokki» we arrive at the border of modern folkloristic material. We may assume, however, that these poems reach considerably far back, because it is difficult to conceive how else a ballad-poet of the 16th or 17th century got the idea of making a poem about heathen deities. If, however, the study of the texts themselves leads us to the conclusion that they contain no genuine pagan tradition, it will not be difficult to explain this singular fact; the ballad literature of the Faroes proves that these poets were thoroughly acquainted with the Old-Norse traditions and that the people itself showed an astonishing interest in all that belongs to the sagas. So one of these poets may have got the idea, when reading Snorri's treatise on Icelandic mythology, of composing a ballad about these heathen gods.

Finally we must mention the popular lore of our own time. As might be expected these modern traditions about Loki are not very numerous; we might even wonder, that there are really any traditions at all, because, as far as we can see, Loki was in the heathen period a deity, well known in mythological tales, but not venerated in a public or private cult. Hence the question may be put: do the modern Loki-traditions root in genuine heathen belief and practice, and if so, we must try to understand the relation between this modern demoniac being and the heathen deity, who show a different character in almost every respect. We will not follow the way of Axel Olrik and Celander in our investigation, who treat the modern traditions as equivalent and even superior to the documents of the heathen period, because we think it methodically objectionable to explain the religious representations of one period by those of another. This holds still more true in the present case, where the gulf of the conversion to Christianity lies between both periods. The only possible way seems to me to scrutinize the extant Old-Norse material and if the conclusions, we arrive at, are in any way concordant with the modern popular tradition, we may consider it as a nice confirmation of our deductions. If, on the contrary, our results do not agree with it, we must not try to mend them by the use of the popular material, but we must seek for the solution of the quite independant problem of the origin of the modern folklore traditions about Loki.

CHAPTER IV

LOKI AND OTHIN

1. The myth of the creation of mankind

Three gods, *viz* Othin, Hœnir and Lóðurr, find according to st. 17 of the Vǫluspá, two pieces of wood, called Askr and Embla, from which they create two living beings, surely a man and a woman. Each of these gods has a special gift to bestow upon them. The following stanza tells us:

Ǫnd þau ne átto   óð þau ne hǫfðo,
lá né læti   né lito góða;
ǫnd gaf Óðinn   óð gaf Hœnir,
lá gaf Lóðurr   ok lito góða.

Unfortunately the meaning of some of the terms, used in this stanza, is not sufficiently clear, and several translations have been proposed. *Ǫnd* of course means »breath», and *óðr* »mental activity»[1]; *litir góðar* may be rendered by »good, healthy colour». But *lá* and *læti* are obscure. If we compare with the stanza the tale, Snorri gives in ch. 8 of Gylfaginning, we find on the one hand a close resemblance, on the other remarkable differences.[2] Here we learn about three gods, that are called now »the sons of Burr»; then the tale runs on in this way: *gaf enn fyrsti ǫnd ok líf, annarr vit ok hrœring, III ásjónu, mál ok heyrn ok sjón.* If the two myths are fundamentally the same — and it is after all in a few minor details, that they differ from each other — then the gifts of the gods may be compared, and in this case the last god has given the outward appearance and the senses (speech, hearing and sight). With *litir góðar* the word *ásjónu* is in concordance; if we translate *læti* by »voice«[1], we find the same idea as in the word *mál* of Snorri's tale. Then the remaining term *lá*, for which several translations have been proposed[2], may be taken in the sense of »blood« or of »vital warmth«, both meanings being after all equally problematic.

---

[1] Cf. my paper Contributions to the Study of Othin etc. (FF Communications Nr. 94) p. 30 sqq.

[2] Cf. Miss *Gras* l. c. p. 4 sqq.

In truth, this stanza of the Vǫluspá reveals to us the existence of a creation-myth, but in a form so very obscure and incomplete that we can not arrive at a clear insight into its structure. I will draw the attention to some difficulties. Othin gives the breath and Hœnir the mental activity. That Othin as god of death also bestows the principle of life, is, indeed, not at all contrary to what we might expect to find, but the combination of Hœnir with the idea of mental activity is highly surprising. In fact, what we know about this god — and it is to be sure exceedingly little — tends to show that his capacities, if he had any, did not lie in the intellectual field. We have only to remember the curious myth about his being sent as a pledge to the Vanir, where his stupidity was easily discovered[3], to consider it rather unpromising for the newly created human beings, that such a god should have given to man his mental faculties. On the other hand one might expect that *Óðr*, a word that I in my above mentioned paper suggested translating as »mental faculties of a higher order, such as poetic genius, ecstasy«, should have been the special gift of Othin, the more so as the name of this god and the word *óðr* are closely connected. Can we therefore assume, that the necessity of composing a line with three alliterative words, has induced our poet to use the words *óðr* and *ǫnd* as well as the name of Othin in one and the same line and that he consequently to avoid the clashing of the cognated words *óðr* and *Óðinn*, has made a shift by combining Othin's name with the word *ǫnd* and by ascribing the *óðr* to Hœnir?

---

[1] Cf. *Finnur Jónsson*, Lexicon Poeticum² p. 388; *S. Nordal*, Völuspá gefin út með skýringum (Reykjavík 1923), p. 53.

[2] *Sijmons-Gering*, Edda-Kommentar I, p. 21.

[3] Ynglingasaga ch. 4.

This is not the only difficulty. The gods find two trees and they wish to transform them into human beings. We would expect them to begin by bestowing the outward appearance, then the principle of life by which these objects become animated beings and lastly the intellectual activities, by which man is distinguished from the animals. Othin and Hœnir have bestowed the last two gifts; the third god consequently must fill the remaining gap; it is Lóðurr who gives the human form. Here again the order, in which the gods bestow their gifts, is different from what we might have expected; the poet mentions in the last place what actually comes first. Moreover Lóðurr gives more than we want him to: the *litir góðar* may be a circumlocution for the human body, but on the other hand *læti*, if it means »voice» and *lá*, if it denotes »blood» or »warmth», belong properly to the domain of Hœnir and Othin. Perhaps the poet had some difficulty in finding words alliterating with Lóðurr, or may be he did not take these things so seriously; at any rate we have ample evidence that the wording of this stanza is not so very exact that we can rely upon it for a reconstruction of the underlying myth.

Is it a genuine heathen myth after all? Several scholars have doubted it. The distinction between *ǫnd* and *óðr* seems somewhat philosophical and may be ascribed to foreign influence. Of course Christian examples have been adduced to explain this curious myth; so *E. H. Meyer* compares the gifts of the three gods with the creation myth in Genesis, however by assuming a reinterpretation of medieval exegetes. It is unnecessary to prove the improbability of this assumption. But it may be possible that this Old-Norse myth has its roots in the soil of classical speculations. In a contribution to the »Studier tillägnade Axel Kock» the Swedish scholar *Johan Palmér*[1] has tried to point out the possible source of the creation-myth in an Arabian treatise about astrology. In this treatise the birth of a child is supposed to depend upon the planetary gods, and accordingly to every one of these gods a special influence is attributed: Jupiter gives the breath, Mars the blood, the Sun the vital warmth a. s. o.[2] After referring to this learned speculation, Palmér continues: »The likeness between this communication and Vǫluspá is striking and it is certainly not by mere chance that it is the most essential part, the creating of man from four elements, which is common to both». One can not help from rubbing ones eyes on reading this unexpected statement. Between seven or nine planetary gods and four elements there is, after all, some difference. Moreover in the Eddic myth there are not four elements but three gods. Palmér only arrives at the number four by taking the »raw material», represented by Ask and Embla, as denoting the earth and its vegetative forces. But this is quite unwarranted, as we destroy in this way the whole frame of the Old-Norse myth. The poet of this stanza of the Vǫluspá has not had any idea in mind of different elements from which man could have been composed and he even could not have done so, because he relates quite a different creation-myth: not the forming of man from the four principal elements, but the animating of a lifeless object. The speculations about the meaning of Hœnir and Lóðurr on the base of this venturesome hypothesis do not bring us any nearer to the solution of the problem.

---

[1] Till Vǫluspa on pp. 108—118.

[2] In the Arabian treatise there are nine different gifts according to the nine months of gravidity. But as Jupiter and Saturnus each are mentioned twice, this can not be the original form; cf. Palmér p. 109.

Still the feeling of uneasiness about this Old-Norse myth remains. If we remember that Marcus Aurelius distinguished three different parts in the human being: body, soul and mind, and that both philosophers of ancient times and of the Middle-Ages have enounced the same or similar ideas, we may ask if the northern poet of the 10th or 11th century has had the opportunity of reading some medieval treatise about these philosophical speculations. It is possible, although it will be difficult to point out his source. In his profound and stimulating book »God, Man and Epic Poetry» *H. V. Routh* has taken this possibility also into consideration, but he hesitates before this conclusion, as we find an idea about a multiple soul also among primitive peoples. And if we consider the differences between the Eddic psychology and f. i. Dante, we may think it most likely, as Routh styles it: »that Northern and Southern Europe were aiming independently at a philosophical explanation of the same mystery, perhaps helping and confirming each other on the way, or perhaps reaching the same conclusion by quite separate paths».[1]

This is, me thinks, a sound reasoning. There is only one objection to be made. The author is of opinion that a creation myth as narrated in the Vǫluspá is due to a development, only possible on a rather high cultural level. But this is not necessary, for we find among primitive peoples speculations about the origin of the first man, that in no respects yield to those of the Eddic poem or even to the Greek philosophers. Every one who has read the interesting book of *Paul Radin* »Primitive Man as philosopher» will have the examples ready to hand. It may suffice to quote an origin myth of a Winnebago clan, where the following is related:[2]

---

[1] Cf. II. p. 43.

[2] Cf. p. 236.

Earthmaker has created the world and wanted to make a being in his own likeness. So he took a piece of clay and made it like himself. Then he talked to what he had created, but it did not answer. He looked at it and saw that it had no mind or thought. So he made a mind for it. Again he talked to it but it did not answer. So he looked at it again and saw that it had no tongue. Then he made it a tongue. Then he spoke to it but still it did not answer. He looked at it and saw that it had no soul. So he made it a soul. Then he talked to it again and it very nearly said something, but it could not make itself intelligible. So Earthmaker breathed into the mouth and then talked to it and it answered.

As Radin subsequently points out, this is a fine example of the efforts to explain the enigma of man's existence in a reasonable way. First the newly created man is endowed with thought, then with the mechanism for speech, with the soul and finally with intelligence. This primitive philosopher obviously has been puzzled by the difference between man and animal; a being may have the faculty of speech and still not be human; it is the last endowment of intelligence which makes really man.

So I see no objection to assuming the myth in the Vǫluspá to be exclusively Teutonic and purely heathen. Even in its sophisticated form it is not incompatible with the reasonings of primitive mind. Still I can not subdue my doubts about its originality. The creation of man from a tree or a piece of wood is a belief of world-wide existence. According to Hesiod Zeus made the human species from an ash-tree[1], which curiously accords with the Old-Norse poem, where the male tree also is called *Askr*. In Australian myths this tale is very frequent[2]; so in the Banks Islands it is told that Qat cut wood of dracaena trees into human shapes; he formed legs, arms, trunks, heads and added ears and eyes; then he fitted part to part and finally by means of magic practices gave them life.[1] In the same way the American tribe of the Qu'iche tell that men are created from wooden dolls, who could move and even procreate, but they had neither heart nor intellect and roamed about like animals.[2] In the Eddic myth we meet however the curious representation that three gods make men from wooden logs by endowing them each with different qualities, roughly speaking, with a human form, with the principle of life and with intellect.

---

[1] Works and Days ll. 143—145.

[2] See many instances in Dixon, Oceanic Mythology, p. 30 (Island of Nieue), 106 (Melanesia), 110 (New Britain and Solomon-islands), 168 (Eastern islands of Indonesia).

The Eddic creation-myth has been compared by *F. von der Leyen*[3] to a curious folk-tale, in which three or four persons shape a woman from a log of wood. In the oldest form of this tale, the Vikramacarita[4], a woodcarver, a goldsmith, a weaver and a priest travel together. Once they pass the night in the open air and they keep watch each in his turn. The woodcarver takes a piece of sandalwood and carves it into the image of a beautiful girl. Then the weaver dresses her, the goldsmith adorns her with all kind of jewels. Finally the priest speaks a magic formula by which it is transformed into a living being. According to the Indian predilection for casuistic tales, the question now arises: whose wife ought she to be? The tradition of this tale has many ramifications; it has travelled eastwards to Further India and Indonesia[5], but also to the peoples living west of India, as is testified by different Persian, Arabian and Turkish versions.[1] It found its way also into Europe, although it is found here only very sporadically [2], obviously by way of literary tradition.

---

[1] Codrington, The Melanesians p. 157.

[2] *W. Krickeberg*, Märchen der Azteken und Inkaperuaner p. 125.

[3] Das Märchen p. 123.

[4] Cf. *J. Hertel*, Indische Märchen p. 178 sqq. This Indian work itself has not come down to us, but it has been incorporated into Hemavijaya's Kathāratnākara (written in 1600 and 1601), and translated into Mongol under the name of Ardshi Bordshi.

[5] Cf. *Bolte-Polívka* III, p. 53 sqq and *J. de Vries*, Volksverhalen uit Oost-Indië II, Nr. 184 and note on p. 396.

Although those forms of the tale, where only three persons cooperate in the making of the girl, show a remarkable likeness to the Eddic poem, it seems to me impossible, that there exists any connection between the two traditions. The Indian tale, a curious example of the adaptation of popular tradition to a highly sophisticated literature, can not have reached Iceland as early as the 10th century; on the other hand does the Old-Norse myth not go beyond what we might expect even in more primitive societies than the Icelandic was at that time. Such tales may be invented independently in different regions of the world. But the comparison with the Indian tale may help us in formulating more exactly the peculiar character of the Old-Norse myth. The poet of the two stanzas in the Vǫluspá does not care much about the material part of man's creation; his main interest is for the psychical constitution of the human kind. We might ask if these stanzas reflect a real myth. If so, it must originally have had another form, or else the poet has only chosen those details he thought most appropriate for his design. In any case it seems to me that we can not consider these stanzas as a mere poetical fancy, because we can not understand how the poet hit upon such uncommon names as Hœnir and Lóðurr. When Snorri gives a rendering of the myth in his mythological treatise, he — remarkably enough — denotes the creating gods as the three sons of Burr. He, however, knew the Vǫluspá very well, as he quotes it on several occasions. Has he known perhaps a text of this poem, where these stanzas were wanting and has he got his creation-myth from an other literary source or from oral tradition? This is not probable, as the likeness between both variants is so great as to presuppose a mutual dependence. Has he then changed the names on purpose, because Hœnir and Lóðurr were incomprehensible names for the public of his days? But a mythographer, such as he, might have been glad to add some more details to his picture of old heathen belief.

---

[1] Cf. *Bolte-Polívka* l.c. and *R. Basset*, Mille et un Contes, Récits et Légendes Arabes II, Nr. 65, p. 312—313. An African variant is printed in *L. Frobenius*, Atlantis III, Volksmärchen der Kabylen p. 100—101.

[2] There are a few examples from Eastern-Europe (cf. *Bolte-Polívka* l. c. p. 56 and *A. Solymossy*, Hongaarsche Sagen, Sprookjes en Legenden Nr. 69) and a very short German variant (*Wisser*, Plattdeutsche Volksmärchen p. 99).

As a matter of fact, Snorri nowhere mentions the name of Lóðurr. We find this god, besides in this stanza of the Vǫluspá, also in the Íslendingadrápa of Haukr Valdísarson[1] where a poem is called *lið Lóðurs vinar.* If this poet, who lived in the 12th century, has known the peculiarity about Lóðurr that he was the friend of Othin, he can not have got this knowledge from the Vǫluspá, where nothing of this kind is said. Perhaps it may be a combination of the three gods with the sons of Burr mentioned by Snorri. Still it is possible that there have been more traditions current about Lóðurr, and we are once more reminded of the easily forgotten fact, that what we possess of Old-Norse literature — although it is in itself considerable enough — is only a small part of what has been once in existence. In trying to »explain» this enigmatical god, we must be very careful, as we practically know nothing about him.

This one fact seems undeniable, that he plays a rôle in the Old-Norse creation-myth. It is unthinkable that a poet has composed these curious stanzas, only led by the desire to relate a quaint and mysterious sounding myth. And finally, against the often repeated assertion, that Lóðurr is nothing else but a camouflaged Loki, we must insist upon the clear wording of the poem, where not the slightest allusion to a possible identity of Lóðurr and Loki is to be found. How indeed to explain, that a poet treating of Loki as one of the principal enemies of the gods in Ragnarǫk should have identified with him a god like Lóðurr, who together with Othin and Hœnir in the beginning of the world had created mankind?

---

[1] *F. Jónsson,* Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning I B, p. 539.

2. The myth of Þjazi

The myth of Þjazi is told in the so-called Haustlǫng, a poem composed by Þjóðólfr ór Hvíni at the end of the 9th century. It is difficult to understand in detail, but in the whole there is no uncertainty about the subject-matter. In the Snorra-Edda the same myth is given at fuller length partly based on the poem[1], partly drawn apparently from slightly different sources. For the coarse ending, where Skaði's wrath is appeased by Loki's obscene performances, there is no parallel whatever in the Haustlǫng. The tale about Þjazi consists of a series of popular motives well known in European folk-tales[2] and it seems difficult to find the real myth underlying this work of fancy. As Miss *Gras* has pointed out, there seems to be, in Haustlǫng as well as in the Snorra Edda, a contradiction between the important and even favourable part Loki plays in this tale and his usual conception as a wicked foe of the gods. She thinks it possible that the poem still preserves some recollection of an earlier time when Loki had quite a different character and was more intimately connected with Othin.[3]

---

[1] Miss *Gras*, l. c. p. 15—16.

[2] Cf. *V d. Leyen* p. 32 sq and *Gras* p. 18.

[3] L. c. p. 17.

If the Skaldic kennings, as Axel Olrik has asserted[1] possess more value as mythological evidence than the more individualistic poetry of the Edda, then circumlocutions as *Hrafnásar vinr* (st. 4), *Hœnis vinr* (st. 7) and *Þórs ofrúni* (st. 8) are of great importance and strangely contradict the remark about Loki in st. 12: *síðan sveik opt ǫsu leikum.* Moreover the only real hero of the tale is Loki, the two other gods doing nothing at all. The reconstruction of the original form of the myth — if there ever has been any myth at all — becomes very difficult, if we 1. must consider the subject-matter itself as the result of a later development under the influence of popular tales, 2. must reduce the three cooperating gods to one actor.[2] The difficulty becomes still greater, if we confront this tale with the very rare cases, where Þjazi is mentioned in Old-Norse literature. Kormákr Ǫgmundarson says in his Sigurðardrápa, written about 960: *vęltu goð Þjatsa* (st. 6); this expression seems rather inappropriate for the only incident in the tale to which it can refer: Þjazi in his persecution of Loki is caught by the gods who make a fire, in which he burns his wings. This is more a case of self-defence, than of tricking; it seems to me that the wording of Kormákr is more fitted for a tale where the gods are the assailing party and have got the better of Þjazi by means of a ruse. The death of the giant is, at any rate, not the most interesting part of the myth; it is therefore the more surprising that it has been extolled as a famous deed of Thor. For this god says himself in st. 19 of the Hárbarðsljóð:

Ek drap Þiaza, inn þruðmóðga iǫtun
upp ek varp augom Alvalda sonar
á þann inn heiða himin.

---

[1] Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum, Geschichte und deutsche Literatur und für Pädagogik 1918, p. 38—48.

[2] The opinion of Miss Gras on p. 18 that the names of the three

This is again in contradistinction to the Lokasenna, where Loki says to Skaði wishing to hurt her by the recollection of her father's death (st. 50)

fyrstr ok øfstr var ek at fiǫrlagi
þars vér à Þiaza þrifom.

Moreover this does not agree with the form of the myth in the Snorra Edda, where it is Othin, who throws the giant's eyes to heaven, where they become brilliant stars. That there have been more tales current about Þjazi is not impossible; perhaps the Hervararsaga has preserved a faint trace of such an unknown myth, where it is related, that Sigrlami fell in battle agains þjazi and that his son Svafrlami in his turn slew the giant and took his daughter Fríðr as his wife.

It may be granted that this saga does not seem very reliable in this case, as the giant can not have been killed by the gods and by Svafrlami at the same time.[1] At all events we have to allow for the possibility that there have been several myths about Þjazi and that only one of them has come down to us, unfortunately in a distorted form that shows the all pervading influence of a popular tale. One thing, however, seems to be clear: the principal adversaries of the giant are either Loki or Thor, but with the exception of the Snorra Edda and Haustlǫng no other source reveals anything about the participation of Othin or of Hœnir. How can this be explained?

In the first place we must pay attention to the singular fact that the »myth» of Þjazi is wholly composed of several

---

gods belong to an old myth, is not in accordance with her own remark, that Loki is the only actor in this tale. This assertion remains without any convincing proof.

[1] Can there be any relation between this Svarflami and the Othin-name Sváfnir? It seems to me highly improbable and such a hypothesis can only make the problem still more complicated.

folklore-motives which occur in other mythological tales as well. After the episode of the giant-eagle that carries away the best morsels of the gods' dinner, we meet the motive of the miraculous object to which every one sticks. It is found in a slightly different form in the tale of Geirrøðr; according to the Snorra Edda Loki in the *valshamr* of Frigg flies to the hall of the giant, but can not free his feet from the window where he has alighted. Just as in the myth of Þjazi he must promise to put Iðunn in possession of the jǫtunn, in the tale of Geirrøðr he has the still more difficult task of bringing Thor into the giant's hall without his dreaded hammer and his magic belt.[1] After having performed this mischief Loki is compelled by the gods to repair the fault; this is the same motive as occurs in the myth of the giant who had boasted of being able to build a palace for the gods. Loki flying by means of the *valshamr* of Frigg or Freyja is a commonplace incident of Scandinavian mythology; we found it already in the tales of Þjazi and Geirrøðr and we may add in the Þrymskviða. These last mentioned myths belong to the cycle of Thor. Finally the motive of two supernatural beings pursuing each other in the disguise of birds, the god making a narrow escape just inside the wall of Asgard, is told with different details in the myth of Othin who steals the poetic mead from Suttungr.

So I think it probable that the tale of Þjazi is composed by borrowing typical motives from other myths; these belong as well to the person of Othin as to that of Thor. This makes it sufficiently clear that we should not waste our time in trying to make a reconstruction of the original form of the myth about Þjazi. The only part that may be authentic, as we do not find any parallels in the mythological literature of the Scandinavian peoples, is the disappearance of Iðunn and her apples of life; although a possible influence of classical tales can not be altogether excluded, we may suppose this to be one of the characteristic features of the Þjazimyth. Perhaps we may go one step farther: the fruit of life belongs naturally to the sphere of Othin, as he is intimately connected with the mythical mead, a drink that bestows not only the gift of poetry, but even of immortality.[1] So we may arrive at the conclusion, that Othin and Loki probably belong together in this tale, although the testimony of the Hárbarðsljóð again points to the possibility, that in another form of the myth Thor is responsible for the death of the giant. As to Hœnir, there is no place for him in this myth; his only task is to make complete the sacred number of three. He appears also in a few other tales together with Othin and Loki, to which we will now turn our attention.

---

[1] Snorra Edda I p. 284 sqq.

3. The introduction of Reginsmál.

In the prose-tale, preceding the Reginsmál in the poetic Edda, the same three gods get into difficulties by their having caught and slain an otter. The fact that the introduction of this poem has been added in Scandinavian tradition to the heroic legend of the Nibelungs does not exclude its once having been an originally independent mythical tale. This seems, at any rate, to be the opinion of Miss *Gras*, who even tries to arrive at some idea about its primitive form.[2]

This question, however, can not be settled in such a summary way. Is there any indication of its originality? The form, in which it is found in Reginsmál, shows clear signs of an adaptation. If we ask, what might have been the oldest conception: the dwarf Andvari or the Andvaranautr, the answer seems to be not so very difficult. The ring, which has been from the very beginning the tragical object in the lays of Sigurd, was supposed to be laden with a curse and quite in harmony with the later tendency to lengthen a heroic legend backwards as well as forwards, a tale was subsequently invented to explain this singular curse. This ring was really an *andvaranautr*, that is literally: »a precious object which causes terror or grief». It is only natural that in course of time such a name was interpreted as a gift of a mythical being with the name of Andvari. Then a tale had to be found or imagined to account for the origin of the tragic gift. If we look at the Eddic poem itself, we see that it is partly composed of motives, appearing elsewhere as well. The most curious instance is the fishing of Loki, who wants to catch a pike and borrows a net from the seagoddess; we are singularly reminded of an experience he had himself, when he was caught in the form of a salmon by Thor. If there ever has been a myth about the supernatural origin of a precious ring, then its contents may have been quite different. Perhaps we find a trace of it in the 5th stanza of Reginsmál, where the dwarf Andvari calls a certain otherwise unknown Gustr the real owner of the ring. We do not know if this person has been in possession of the precious object before it came into the hands of Andvari, as *Gering* suggests[1], or if Gustr and Andvari are only different names for the same mythical being, as *F. Jónsson* is inclined to suppose[2]; perhaps *Sijmons* is right in assuming that this curious stanza belongs to another poem treating the same legend. When he furthermore asks, if the eight heroes mentioned in the following lines have anything in common with the Sigurd-legend proper, he has once more called our attention to the confused and unreliable form of the traditions about the Andvaranautr.

---

[1] Cf. my De Germaansche Oudheid, ch. XLI.

[2] L. c. p. 14.

---

[1] Edda-Kommentar II, p. 167.

[2] Lexicon poeticum p. 209 »sikkert identisk».

Is is a well-known fact, that the myth about the covering up of the otter's hide with gold presents several difficulties; we may compare it with old German customs of atonement for the slaying of an animal as has been amply illustrated by Jacob Grimm.[1] But there are again so many differences that it is unwarrantable to explain the curious tale of Andvari by assuming that the same custom has been known in Scandinavia.[2] The resemblance to the tale of Fredegar, that the Goths had to pay a penalty to the Franks consisting in heaping up so much gold until it reached the top of the head of a Frankish warrior sitting on his horse, is extremely great. There is even this detail, that the receiving party is not content, until the gold reaches as high as the summit of the warrior's lance, just as Hreiðmarr wants one hair that is still bare, to be covered up with the gold. I do not think it probable that there is any immediate connection between the Frankish tale and the Old-Norse poem, as *G. Schütte* seems to believe [3]; but in my opinion it is clear that we have here a *literary motive*, that consequently may have been added to the Old-Norse tradition of the Nibelungs in a rather late period.[4] It is surely of no small importance that there is no allusion to this myth in skaldic poetry before Snorri coins the kenning *otrgjǫld* in a stanza of his highly artificial Háttatal, where he uses not less than four different circumlocutions for gold.[1] Such a list of kennings is found also in the Bjarkamál[2] and it is even probable that Snorri has imitated some of them, cf. his *reiðmálmr Gnítaheiðar* with *Rínar rauðmálmr* in Bjarkamál, or *þungfarmr Grana* with *Grana fagrbyrði.* Here we find also the kenning dpl *tregum Otrs gjǫldum*, but this does not prove that the myth is old, for these stanzas do not belong to the oldest form of the poem but to the skaldic art of the 12th century.[3] The next and at the same time the last allusion is to be found in a 14th century poem of Einarr Gilsson [4], who uses the same kenning as Snorri, but only in a more complicated form: *Otrs nauðgjǫld.* These sporadic records in the skaldic literature do not prove at all that the myth itself is old and genuine heathenism.[5] Moreover the fact that the tale as it appears in Reginsmál is only related as a prosaic introduction and that it is filled up with stanzas belonging to a gnomic poem like Alvíssmál or Vafþrúðnismál make it still more credible that it is a relatively recent accretion to the legend of the Nibelungs.

---

[1] Deutsche Rechtsaltertümer II, p. 239 sqq.

[2] *A. Raszmann* in Germania XXVI (1881), p. 378 sq.

[3] Cf his paper in Edda, Nordisk Tidsskrift for Litteraturforskning 1917 II p. 249—250.

[4] As it is unknown in the German tradition of the Nibelungs, we have no reason to suppose that Scandinavia acquired from Germany a form of the Nibelung lay with this motive. But it is quite possible that both traditions wandered to the North, independently and at different periods; then they came into contact with each other because they were both of Frankish origin and hence in the mind of Old-Norse people belonged together.

Then the divine triad appear in a very unexpected light. Othin belongs as the god of war to a hero like Sigurd; that is in conformity with Old-Norse conceptions. Loki as the cunning god may have been chosen for the part of the person who gives good advice in a difficult position. We will see presently that he often does so. But what has Hœnir to do with this heroic matter? There is indeed no reason whatever to presume that he should have had more importance in an original form of this quasi-myth[1]; this »deus otiosus» has only to give his name in order to make the triad complete. And I think that we are allowed to put the question, why the poet hit upon the name of this quite unimportant god. The only explanation seems to be that he has read a tale somewhere, where Hœnir is mentioned together with Othin and Loki. But the only tale where this is the case, is the myth of Þjazi. Here Hœnir appears in exactly the same circumstances as in the introduction of the Reginsmál. It would indeed be rather miraculous if two quite independent and original myths had been known, in which Loki was the principal actor, Othin a subordinate assistant and Hœnir a mere name. So it seems to me not borne out by the extant material that the triad of gods, as they appear in a couple of literary traditions, answers to a corresponding mythical conception.

---

[1] Stanza 41, cf. *F. Jónsson*, Skjaldedigtning II B, p. 72: besides *otrgjǫld* three other circumlocutions.

[2] *F. Jónsson*, ibid. I B, p. 170, st. 4—6.

[3] *Heusler-Ranisch*, Eddica Minora p. XXV and *Axel Olrik*, Danmarks Heltedigtning I, p. 99.

[4] Skjaldedigtning II B, p. 423, st. 19.

[5] *E. A. Kock* reads in st. 10 of the Þórsdrapa the kenning *arfi eirs fjarðar* for Loki and explains it as an allusion to the Andvaranautr (cf. Notationes Norroenae § 455). But the ms. has *arfi eiðs fjarðar* (cf. p. 60).

4. The three gods in popular tradition.

A Faroese ballad, where Othin, Hœnir and Loki are mentioned together, has had a considerable importance in the speculations about the meaning of Loki. In the Lokka Táttur[2] a peasant must try to save his son from the pursuit of a giant; he asks the help of the three gods to hide him from the troll. Othin puts him into a grain of wheat, Hønir changes him into the feather of a swan, but the giant finds him in both cases. Then Lokki changes him into an egg of the spawn of a fish. Although the giant even finds him here, the egg falls out of his hand; Lokki seizes it and succeeds by means of a trick in killing the monster.

Again we are in the presence of a typical folkloristic motive and Axel Olrik has already made the observation that the mythological value of this ballad is practically nil [1]. The fact that the gods act on behalf of a peasant's son, is sufficient to show that this humoristic tale has nothing to do with heathen mythology, but belongs exclusively to the domain of popular literature. It is characteristic of Faroese traditions, where the names of the gods have been preserved in folk's memory down to relatively recent times, that the poet has tried to make the tale interesting by introducing three gods into it. We must not expect, however, to learn anything about the character of Loki, for, as Olrik remarks, he is the same as we find him everywhere in mythical tales: benevolent to mankind but wily in his relation to demons [2].

---

[1] Cf. *Grass* l. c. p. 14.

[2] *V. U. Hammershaimb*, Sjúrðar kvæði p. 140—145.

There remains only one question to be answered: From which source did this ballad-poet obtain the names of this curious triad? Of course not from any heathen myth, unknown to us, but from the common stock of Old-Norse literature. If we take into consideration the keen interest of Faroese ballad-poets for the legend of the Nibelungs and the way in which they have made use of written saga's, we can not arrive at any other conclusion but the supposition that he has found the three gods Othin, Hœnir and Loki in the introductory prose of Reginsmál. For our knowledge of the heathen religion and mythology the Lokka táttur is absolutely worthless. Those scholars who have made use of it in their investigation into the character of Loki have been misled by their uncritical confidence in the traditional character of popular tales and ballads.

The same applies to an old-English incantation-formula that is brought into connection with this group of mythical tales. The clergyman *Robt M. Keanley* tells about an experience which he had, when still a boy, in Lincolnshire, where he was born [1]. During an epidemic fever he came with quinine to an old woman whose grandchild was very ill. She, however, took him to the bedroom and »there in the centre of the footboard were nailed three horseshoes with a hammer fixed crosswise upon them. Taking down the hammer she smartly tapped each shoe, saying words to this effect as she did so:

---

[1] Loki i nyere folkeoverlevering, Danske Studier 1908, p. 196—197.

[2] Miss *Gras* is quite on a wrong track if she considers »this more recent poem more original in several respects than the introduction to Reginsmál and the Snorra Edda» (p. 22).

Father, Son and Holy Ghost
Nail the devil to this post —
With this mell I thrice do knock
One for God, and one for Wod, and one for Lok».

But perhaps it is better to quote the formula in the dialectic form as it has been published afterwards [2]:

Feyther, Son and Holy Ghoast
naale the divil to this poast;
Throice I smoites with Holy Crok
with this mell Oi throice dew knock
One for God an' one for Wod an' one for Lok.

Axel Olrik points out the identity of Wod and Lok with the Old-Norse Othin and Loki; and pretends that God has taken the place of Hœnir. If we then take into consideration the Faroese ballad we may arrive at the conclusion, that there existed a magical formula with these three gods and that it has been current from Lincolnshire to the Faroes. This formula makes it probable that »en trehed hvori Woden og »Lok» havde plads, ogsaa er paakaldt af de Angler der vandrede til Britannien»[1]. Dr. Philippson is of opinion that the Anglosaxon belief in Loki is not proved by this formula, but that it is far more likely to have been introduced into England from the Faroes, for here the three gods occur in the Loka tåttur[2]. A curious conclusion indeed, but after all an alternative which Olrik had also taken into consideration: »Dog selv om formlen skulde være overført fra vikingetidens Nordboer, giver den en höjst interessant berigelse af vor viden: yder den eneste direkte paakaldelse af Loke — ganske vist kun som en person af Odins-treheden»[3].

---

[1] Folklore 1898 p. 186 = *Axel Olrik*, Danske Studier 1908, p. 200.

[2] County Folk-Lore V, p. 125 = *F. Ohrt*, Trylleord, fremmede og danske (Danmarks Folkeminder XXV) p. 82 note.

It is surprising that no one, before enunciating such far-reaching conclusions, has asked if this piece of English folk-lore is quite reliable. For one may wonder that a boy who once has heard a magic formula under rather nerve-straining circumstances, recollects it about forty years later without one single alteration. Moreover is it possible that a formula has been handed down during a period of fourteen ages without considerable changes in form and contents, especially if we consider that it must have been originally an alliterative poem and that it has been recast into the modern form of a rhyme-verse? *F. Ohrt* has cast doubt upon the trustworthiness of this formula[4] and I think it also quite unadmissible to make use of this questionable evidence for the reconstruction of the old Teutonic belief. *God* of course belongs to the Christian belief, *Wod* may denote the heathen god, whom people remembered even in Christian times as the principal deity of their pagan forefathers. But what of *Lok?* As a divine triad is obligatory in this kind of formula, a third one had to be added and its name had to rhyme with the words *crok* and *knock* in the preceding lines. Moreover, there are so many fanciful words and names in charms, used in modern times, that we must be very careful in abusing them as reliable documents from the heathen period.

---

[1] Danske Studier 1908, p. 201.

[2] Germanisches Heidentum bei den Angelsachsen (Leipizg 1929) p. 153.

[3] Ibid. p. 202.

[4] Trylleord, fremmede og danske, p. 82—83.

5. Lóðurr and Loki

It is indeed a singular fact that we find the gods Othin and Hœnir acting together with a third deity, who is called at one time Lóðurr, Loki at another. The conclusion lies ready to hand: Loki must be the same god as Lóðurr. This has been asserted by several scholars, who argued that in these mythical tales the same triad was meant and that consequently Lóðurr and Loki were different names for one single divinity[1]. Only very few have expressed their doubt about this identification, as f.i. J. Hoffory[2], F. Jónsson[3] and J. Palmér[4].

Is there any possible means of arriving at a satisfactory conclusion? We must begin to dismiss all etymological speculations, for they can only confuse the problem. The question evidently must be this: are we entitled on the basis of the myths known to us, to conclude the identity of Loki and Lóðurr, although in the whole extent of Old-Norse tradition there is not the slightest allusion to it? This is the more surprising as it is expressly stated on the contrary, that Loki is the same deity as Loptr. The Icelandic mythographers seem not to have been impressed by the strange resemblance between the creation-myth on the one side and the different tales about Othin, Loki and Hœnir on the other. Now I have tried to make it clear that both the Faroese ballad and the English magic formula are absolutely unreliable material and that the introduction of Reginsmál in the form wherein it is preserved is no original myth at all. So there remains only the myth of Þjazi, which presents again the serious inconvenience that it is quite submerged by typical folklore-motives. We are unable to see, what may have been the original form of the tale, when it was still a myth. As Hœnir has nothing to do whatever, we do not know, if he belonged from the very outset to the deities Othin and Loki, or if he has been added to complete the triad. In this case the reason of his being chosen may have been, that he was found as the third deity in another triad, where besides Othin Lóðurr was mentioned, whose name had some resemblance to Loki. This does not imply, of course, that Lóðurr and Loki are the same god.

---

[1] Cf. *E. Wisén*, Odin och Loke, p. 70; *A. Noreen*, Tidskrift for Philologi NR IV, p. 28 sqq; *P. Herrmann*, Nordische Mythologie p. 405; *Golther*, Handbuch der germanischen Mythologie p. 409; *A. Olrik* in Festskrift Feilberg p. 587; *E. Mogk* in Hoops' Reallexikon III, col. 164 b; *F. R. Schröder*, Germanentum und Hellenismus p. 116; *Gering-Sijmons*, Edda-Kommentar I, p. 22—23; Miss *Gras* l. c. p. 6 sq.

[2] Edda-Studien p. 117.

[3] Goðafræði Norðmanna og Íslendinga p. 84.

[4] Festskrift *Axel Kock* p. 113.

The startling conformity between the triads Othin-Hœnir-Lóðurr and Othin-Hœnir-Loki is in itself not sufficient to prove this identity. The more so, as these myths belong to quite different spheres of religious representations. Now more proofs have been adduced in favour of the identification of Loki and Lóðurr, partly on an etymological, partly on a folkloristic basis. As Lóðurr and Loki were supposed to be the same deity, scholars tried to explain the name Lóðurr as denoting a fire-demon.

We possess not less than four etymologies. 1. The word may be compared with the German verb *lodern*[1] and means »the blazing one»; 2. The name is derived from an older from *Vlóþurr and is the same as the Indian Vrtra, the demon of heat[2] (this etymology as well as the former one has not been accepted). 3. The word is explained from a presumable name *LuhþuraR[1], which should have had the meaning of »bringer of flames». 4. An original form Logaþore, which is found on the runic inscription of the large brooch of Nordendorf, lies at the bottom of the name[2]; it must be nearly related to the word for »fire», *logi.* Of course these etymologies have only a hypothetical value and hold good only as long as we accept the interpretation of Lóðurr as a fire-god[3].

---

[1] *Wisén*, Odin och Loke p. 70.

[2] *A. Noreen*, Tidskrift for Filologi NR IV, p. 28 and Urgermani-

This may, perhaps, not be said of the last explanation and Miss Gras rightly stresses the importance of the runic inscription, which, if correctly interpreted, may yield very important evidence in favour of the existence of this deity, not only in Old-Scandinavian belief, but also among other Germanic tribes. Therefore she criticizes Gering, who without any counterevidence rejects the etymology of v.d. Leyen as a mere soap-bubble[4]. But it is indeed very difficult to refute this, as the assertion itself is not supported by any argument at all! For it can not be proved that the word *logaþore* is the name of a god[5], nor is the etymology of Lóðurr

---

sche Lautlehre p. 102 (not repeated however in his Altnordische Grammatik).

[1] This is a suggestion of *Max Blankensteiner* first mentioned by Olrik's study on Loki in the Feilberg-Festskrift p. 587 and afterwards adopted by Mogk and Sijmons.

[2] First *F. v. d. Leyen*, Zeitschr. des Vereins für Volksk. XXV (1915) p. 136 sqq and slightly improved by Von Unwerth, ibidem XXVI (1916) p. 81 sqq and *W. Krause*, Zeitschr. f. d. Alt. LXIV (1927) p. 269 sqq.

[3] The etymology of *G. Wilke*, Die Religion der Indogermanen in archäologischer Beleuchtung p. 120, who explains the word as **luk-turó-s* or »basket of light» is quite unacceptable.

[4] Edda-Kommentar I, p. 23 note.

[5] There are several other 'translations' of this enigmatic word. *V. d. Leyen*, l.c. renders *loga þore Wodan* by »Wodan möge die heilige Flamme entfachen»; *P. Herrmann* in Altdeutsche Kultgebräuche (Jena 1920) p. 65 by »Die Heirat ersiege, Wodan». Quite different

from a presupposed ***lohaþoraz* more than a hypothesis. As the Scandinavian and West-Germanic words do not fully agree, and moreover as there is no argument at all for the identity of these names on the basis of their religious meaning, the ingenious interpretation of v.d. Leyen has to be accepted or rejected according to the inclination of each scholar. Miss Gras is of opinion that the name of the Dutch demon *Lodder* may be of some value in settling this question; I shall presently have the opportunity to show that this is a pure mirage.

In the creation-myth the enigmatic god Lóðurr bestows some qualities belonging to the physical status of mankind. If from the very beginning three gods have been included in this myth, we might expect that a deity, intimately connected with procreation and fertility would take part in it. A god like Freyr should not be wanting in the creation of mankind. If so, this Lóðurr, about whom we practically know nothing, may fill the place of Freyr[1]; could it therefore be possible that he is a deity of fertility? With such a representation the etymology, proposed by *J. Sahlgren*[2] tallies very well; he explains the name by an older form *Loðverr, which he compares with the name *Loðkona* to be found in the topographical name *Locknevi*, older *Lodhkonuwi*. This Loðkona denotes in his opinion »a goddess of fertility»; the first syllable *loð-* may be compared with gothic *liudan*. This etymology has been favourably accepted by several scholars[3]

---

is the reading of *S. Feist*, Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi XXXV (1919) p. 262 sqq, who inverts the order of the letters: *ero þa gol*, which should mean: »Earth sang the charm».

[1] This has already been argued by *Detter* and *Heinzel* in Paul und Braune's Beiträge XVIII (1894) p. 560.

[2] Namn och Bygd VI, p. 33 sqq.

[3] *F. R. Schröder*, Germanentum und Hellenismus p. 116; *Güntert*, Der arische Weltkönig und Heiland p. 309; *E. Wessén* in Acta Philo-

There is, however, one difficulty; this word must have a short vowel *ŏ;* the actual form in the Edda has a long *ô*. The objection of Gering[1], that lóþors in the Íslendingadrápa is used in aðalhending with *glóþa* is of no value, for Haukr Valdísarson, who lived in the 12th century has borrowed the kenning *Lóþurs vinr* for Othin from Eyvindr's Háleygjatal, where the vowel may be short as well as long. In fact, the Vǫluspá proves the length of the vowel, as in the line of st. 18 *lǫ gaf Lóðurr* no other quantity is possible. But Sahlgren has aptly suggested, that the long *ó* may be the consequence of the fact, that in course of time the name Lǫðverr (where the first syllable is by position long) was changed into Lǫðurr and then the syllable *Lǫð-*, used in the same line, had to lengthen its vowel. Hence, all things considered, the ingenious hypothesis, that explains Lóðurr as a god of fertility, leads to very satisfactory results.

If Lóðurr is such a deity of fertility, his identity with Loki, about which the Icelandic tradition has not the slightest idea, becomes wellnigh impossible. F. R. Schröder goes as far as to contend that on the ground of the »indubitable» identity Loki also must have been a fertility demon, but I think such a way of reasoning in mythologicis very dangerous. The real character of Loki must become evident from his myths, not from hypothetical constructions.

A fresh support to the theory about the identity of Lóðurr and Loki has been adduced by Miss Gras, who takes into consideration the Dutch popular tradition about a demon called *Lodder* or *Loeke*. The idea of their belonging to the same religious conceptions as Lóðurr and Loki was first expressed by Grüner-Nielsen and Axel Olrik[2] and they

---

logica Scand. IV, p. 101; *Palmér*, Festskrift Axel Kock p. 113; *K. F. Johansson* in Skrift. Hum. Vet. Samfund i Uppsala XX, 1 p. 96 note.

[1] Edda-Kommentar I, p. 23.

[2] Danske Studier 1912 p. 87—90.

arrive at the conclusion that the figure of Lóðurr-Loki may have been known in the Netherlands, but that it can not be proved. The possibility depends upon our ideas about the original character of these gods. If we explain this mythical being as »et eller andet natligt gækkende væsen, snarest af lygtemandsagtig art», we may easily arrive at a definition, that holds good both for the Dutch and Scandinavian mythical beings. But then we ought to add: not for the god of Old-Norse tradition, but for the popular demon as it is found in modern popular lore. Only by assuming that this modern representation is at the same time the original form of the Loki-conception — an enormous exaggeration of the value of the popular traditions now-a-days — this construction may be possible. But then we have not paid sufficient attention to the following facts:

1. Loki is nowhere in heathen tradition such an inferior demon as the Dutch Loeke-Lodder; his character as a fire-god is moreover very questionable.

2. Lóðurr has nothing whatever to do with fire; he is only an actor in the creation myth and is called the friend of Othin.

3. Lóðurr can only be compared with the Lodder of Dutch folklore if we accept his identity with Loki and in consequence attribute to him all the details characteristic of Loki.

4. Only by reducing the real sphere of activity of the Dutch Loeke-Lodder on the one hand and of the Scandinavian Lokke in popular belief — about whom we will presently have more to say (ch. XI) — on the other hand to the vaguest possible formula: a kind of »arnevætte» or demon of the hearth, is it possible to detect any likeness between them. But then no trace is left of the heathen god Loki.

Miss Gras is of opinion, that the combination with the name Logaþore on the brooch of Nordendorf is a very conclusive argument for Olrik's construction. A Dutch demon an Old-German god, the Old-Norse Lóðurr, it all seems to fit in wonderfully. I see, however, nothing but a medley of contradictions. For the Dutch Lodder is a demon of no importance at all; his character is explained by Miss Gras in connection with the element of water — on quite unsatisfactory grounds — Lóðurr is a god of some importance, as he is the friend of Othin and an actor in the creation-myth. This does not tally. Is the Dutch demon perhaps a degenerated form of an original god corresponding to the Eddic Lóðurr? Or is Lóðurr on the contrary a higher developed form of an original demoniac being like Lodder-Loeke and the modern Scandinavian Lokke? Most scholars will consider the last alternative to be the most probable. But then the Old-German (Alamannic?) Logaþore of the seventh century must have been again a highly developed deity, as he is mentioned in the inscription together with Wodan and Donar[1], and even takes the first place. What then is his connection with a demon like the Dutch Lodder, who certainly is no »arnevætte» at all, but a ghostlike being, such as an »alf» or a »kobold»? In fact, the likeness consists only in the superficial similarity of the names and when these are found in such widely separated geographical and chronological areas, we can not be too cautious in basing upon such a similarity, which may be only fortuitous, a hypothesis about the original character of a god.

So I will leave this field of barren speculations and return to the variegated richness of Old-Norse mythology.

---

[1] If we accept these combinations, the explanation of the enigmatic Hœnir is found! Of course he must be the same as Donar, as most clearly results from the comparison of the triads Othin-Loðurr-Hœnir and Wodan-Logaþore-WigiþonaR.

CHAPTER V.

LOKI AS THE COMPANION OF THOR

1. The tale of Geirrøðr

The adventures of Thor on his journey to the giant Geirrøðr are related in several sources. About the year 1000 the Icelandic skald Eilífr Goðrúnarson treated the myth in the Þórsdrápa, a poem that is rather difficult to understand because the poet made use of very complicated and obscure kennings and consequently the tradition is in many places defective.[1] It has been preserved in the manuscripts RWT of the Snorra Edda, immediately after the paraphrase of the myth; in U the poem itself is wanting, but the tale closes with the remark: »Eptir þessi sǫgu hefir ort Eilífr Goðrúnarson i Þórsdrápa» [2]. As *R. C. Boer* observes[3], this proves that in the archetype of the manuscripts the poem has been present; it does not follow however, that Snorri himself had already added the poem as a piece of justification for his tale.

The myth, as it is told by Snorri, does not fully agree with the Þórsdrápa. But he had besides this poem another source, for he quotes two stanzas from a poem in fornyrðislag. Here several names are mentioned, those of the giant's daughters and of the river Thor must cross before arriving at the dwelling of Geirrøðr. The myth seems to have been well-known, for the poet Þjóðólfr Arnarson makes a vísa on the demand of the Norwegian king Haraldr harðráði (1047—1066) in which he makes an allusion to the combat between the god and the giant.[1]

---

[1] *F. Jónsson*, Skjaldedigtning I A, p. 148—152 and B, p. 139—144.

[2] Snorra Edda II, p. 301.

[3] Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie 1924 p. 184.

In the Gesta Danorum of Saxo Grammaticus the myth is alluded to in the story about the journey of Thorkillus to the realm of Geruthus, a kind of Underworld, where the giant and his daughters are lying dead after having been overpowered by Thor.[2] This passage of a couple of sentences is of slight value for our knowledge of the myth; the same may be said of the romantic saga of Þorsteinn bœjarmagn[3], where the heathen god is replaced by a peasant's son.

The German scholar *E. Mogk* has recently published a very valuable paper on these different traditions.[4] He arrives at the conclusion that all our sources present the myth in a literary form, varying according to the character of the authors. As for Snorri, he has combined different myths and has composed a tale from this material, which Mogk has very aptly called »mythologische Novelle».[5] As the two sources of Snorri he considers the Þórsdrápa and the poem in fornyrðislag, in which Thor had some adventures with female »trolls». But this last supposition seems to me improbable as in one of the stanzas (only occurring in U) Thor himself says:

Þá er Gjálp ok Gneip dœtr Geirraðar
vildu hefja mik til himins.

---

[1] *F. Jónsson* l. c. I A, p. 380 and B, p. 350.

[2] Ed. *Holder* p. 290.

[3] Fms III, p. 175—198.

[4] Die Überlieferungen von Thors Kampf mit dem Riesen Geirröð in Festskrift tillägnad *Hugo Pipping* (Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland CLXXV, 1924) p. 379—388.

[5] Cf his paper Novellistische Darstellung mythologischer Stoffe Snorris und seiner Schule, in FF Communications Nr. 51.

It is obvious that this is the same story, that we find in the Þórsdrápa and so I am of opinion, that the fornyrðislag-poem also treated of the myth of Geirrøðr, although in a different way from the skaldic poem. The companion of Thor is in the Snorra Edda Loki, in the Þórsdrápa however Þjálfi; we might ask what it was like in the original form.

In Eilífr's poem Loki is mentioned in a few stanzas. This is the case in the opening stanza:

> Flugstalla réð felli
> fjǫrnets goða at hvetja
> (drjúgr vas Loptr at ljúga)
> lǫgseims faðir heiman;
> geðreynir kvað grœnar
> Gauts herÞrumu brautir,
> vilgi tryggr, til veggjar
> viggs Geirrøðar liggja.

The father of the Midgard-serpent is Loki, and he has tricked his companion Thor into a very dangerous expedition, by saying that green roads conducted the traveller to Geirrøð's dwelling. The epitheton *vilgi tryggr* and the parenthetic clause *drjúgr vas Loptr at ljúga* show us Loki as a deceiver; this agrees very well with Snorri's story, although it is not necessary to assume that Eilífr has known the introductory tale as to how Loki was caught by the giant and afterwards released on the condition that he would bring Thor unarmed into the house of the giant.

In the following stanza it is told, that Thor was not reluctant to accept Loki's proposal (Þóarr lét skǫmmum Gammleið biðja sik geðstrangrar gǫngu[1]). Moreover it is expressly stated that they were both eager to go: fystusk þeir at þrysta þorns niðjum.

---

[1] According to the interpretation of *H. Kuhn*, Das Füllwort *of-um* im Altwestnordischen p. 37, who proves that the text of *F. Jónsson: geðstrangr of lét gǫngu* is impossible. His reading is more satisfactory than that of *I. Lindqvist*, Norröna Lovkväden från 800- och 900-talen p. 94, who proposes: *geðstrangr ár lét gǫngu.*

Again Loki is mentioned in st. 3, but here the text presents serious difficulties:

Gǫrr varð í fǫr fyrri
farmr meinsvárans arma
sóknar hapts með svipti
sagna galdrs an Rǫgnir.

F. Jónsson arrives, although by means of a strange rearrangement of words at the following translation: »Þjálfe was more disposed to go with Thor than Loki was». This interpretation is very improbible on the following grounds 1. In st. 2 it is said, that both Thor and Loki were eager to fight with the giants; then st. 3 can not tell us the opposite. 2. Þjálfi can not have been denoted by the kenning *Rǫgnir sóknar*, because nobody can detect in the words »the Othin of the battle» that Þjálfi, *who is introduced here for the first time*, is meant by them. It is likewise improbable that *sóknar* at the beginning of the third line and *Rǫgnir* at the end of the fourth belong together. 3. F. Jónsson makes the following construction: *Rǫgnir sóknar varð fyrri í fǫr með sagna svipti an arma farmr galdrs hapts.* But if a poet wants to say: »The battle-Rǫgnir went earlier with Thor than Loki» he can not express this by the words: »Earlier went Loki with Thor than the battle-Rǫgnir.» I accept the interpretation of E. A. Kock [1], who reads *farmr arma meinsvarrans* =Loki, obviously an imitation of the kenning *farmr Sigvinjar arma* in Haustlǫng. Then Loki is the subject of the clause; he is *fyrri gǫrr í fǫr* than Rǫgnir, or according to Kock than *galdrs Rǫgnir.* Now Rǫgnir is a name for Othin, and *galdrs Rǫgnir* can be no other, as Othin is especially connected with *galdr;* the addition of this word is quite superfluous and it depends upon our interpretation of the remaining part of the stanza, whether we shall combine *galdrs* with the following word or with the preceding one. Kock reads as follows: *með svipti sagna sóknar hapts* and explains it in this way: *sóknar hapts* = *Gunnar* = *gunnar. Gunnar sǫgn* = *víglið* and then *gunnar sagna sviptir* = Thor. I propose the kenning: *með svipti sagna galdrs sóknar hapts* with the following explication: *sóknar hapt* = *Gunnr*, the name of a valkyrja. The *galdr* of the valkyrja is the battle and then again as Kock. The end of the comparative clause is consequently: *fyrri* .... *an Rǫgnir.*[1] The stanza tells us that Loki was more eager to go than Othin himself.

---

[1] Notationes Norrœnae § 2106.

In the following stanza Loki is again mentioned; here Thor is called *bǫlkveitir Loka*, which F. Jónsson translates as »the assistant of Loki», and I. Lindqvist more satisfactorily as »den omintetgöraren av Lokes svek». The first time Þjálfi makes his appearance is in st. 9 and here the poet does not use any kenning at all, but calls him by his proper name Þjálfi. I am of opinion that the poem presupposes a journey of the three gods Thor, Loki and Þjálfi.

It is very remarkable that in the course of the narrative Loki is relegated to the background and Þjálfi becomes more prominent. Still, if Kock is right in his interpretation, Loki is once more mentioned in st. 10, where we read:

ógndjarfan laut arfi
eiðsfjarðar hug meira;
skalfa Þórs né Þiálfa
þróttar steinn við ótta.

Kock reads the word *eiðs* as *eirs*, which is required by the assonance (*eirs : meira*) and explains it as follows[2]: *fjarðar*

---

[1] *H. de Boor* seems to accept the same interpretation, cf. Deutsche Island-Forschung 1930, I, p. 135 note 67.

[2] Notationes Norrœnae § 455.

eir is »gold» and the heir to the gold is Loki. He considers this as an allusion to the tale of Andvari and argues that the symmetry of the stanza is much better, if the first half of the stanza tells about the three gods together (*stríðkviðjendr*), the second part about Loki, Thor and Þjálfi individually. There are, however, some objections. The parallellism with st. 21

Vreiðr stóð Vrǫsku bróðir,
vá gagn faðir Magna;
skelfra Þórs né Þjálfa
þróttar steinn við ótta.

shows that it is not necessary, that the first part mentions Loki, because in st. 21 Loki is also altogether omitted. Moreover the allusion to the Andvara-myth is very questionable, not only because Loki can hardly be called the *heir* to the gold, but also on the ground that it is open to serious doubt, if the tale of Andvari has been current as early as the 10th century. I believe that the *arfi èirs fjarðar* means Thor, for he is the son of Jǫrð and in the artificial language of this poet a kenning »the fjord of the ore» for »earth» is not at all improbable.[1]

I arrive at the conclusion that Eilífr tells about a journey to the giant's home undertaken by three gods: Thor, Loki and Þjálfi. In the Snorra Edda the last one is nowhere mentioned; here we find only Loki as the companion of Thor. The most striking contradiction is in the episode of the wading through the river Vimur. Eilífr says (st. 9):

---

[1] Cf. *gammleið* for »Loki», *hlympél* for »stick» a. s. o. The following kennings for earth may be compared: *gaupu ver* in st. 5 of the same poem; *rádýris vǫrr* (Skj B I, p. 254, 14, 2). The earth is a sea, a fjord, but then qualified by something belonging to the earth. *Rádýris vǫrr* is »the wake of the roe». Would a kenning »the fjord of the ore» be less appropriate?

Unnz með ýta sinni
(aflraun var þat) skaunar
á seilhimin sjóla
sjálflopta kom Þjálfi.[1]

Snorri on the contrary: *en Loki helt undir megingjarðar.* In this part of his narrative Snorri seems to make use of a poetical source, because 1. he quotes a fornyrðislag stanza, 2. when he tells of the giant's daughter Gjálp, who caused the river to flow so impetuously, he uses the alliterative formula *at ósi skal á stemma*, 3. he makes an allusion to the help of the rowan-tree, again quoting a proverb *reynir er bjǫrg Þórs.*[2] The question is this: has Snorri left Þjálfi out on purpose, or has Eilífr added this god? For it is quite certain, that in the original myth Thor has had only one companion, because it is impossible that both Loki and Þjálfi could have taken hold of his waistbelt to cross the swollen river! Now Eilífr can not suppress the fact, that Loki has made the journey together with Thor; this is in accord with Snorri's account; hence we may conclude that it was Loki, who originally accompanied Thor.

Eilifr has added Þjálfi, not because, as Miss Gras supposes[3], he was a fervent admirer of Thor and could not allow his hero to journey together with the low-minded Loki[4], but because he knew from other myths that Þjálfi was usually the god's companion. He could not oust Loki from the introductory part of the tale, because he played a part here, exclusively his own; but later on during the journey he could replace him by Þjálfi: it does not matter if this servant or Loki saved his life by clinging to Thor's waistbelt.[1]

---

[1] Cf. for the interpretation *E. A. Kock* l. c. § 1832.

[2] Cf. *Feilberg*, Bidrag til en Ordbog over Jyske Almuesmaal III, p. 123 s. v. *rön.*

[3] L. c. p. 39.

[4] The poet says in st. 3 that Loki is quite prepared to accompany Thor.

We may ask: what is the meaning of the myth? Thor and Loki journey to the giants and have here a difficult struggle. Moreover Thor seems to have gone without his usual weapons; the poem of Eilfír does not clearly state this, but Snorri is on this respect very positive. The introductory story serves to explain why Thor starts on this dangerous journey *sva at hann hefði hvárki hamar né megingjarðar.* This is, however, not quite exact, for he tells himself that *Loki helt undir megingjarðar*, while crossing the river Vimur. Snorri has a curious way of accounting for this surprising fact: he comes first to the house of Gríðr and *hon léði honum megingjarða ok járngreipr er hon átti*, *ok staf sinn*, *er heitir Griðarvǫlr* Indeed, Thor makes use of the last gift while wading the river and when he crushes the back of the giant's daughters, who are concealed under his chair. But the fact that this *gýgr* gives him the *megingjarðr* does not agree with the introduction, Snorri himself has placed before the myth. Eilífr seems also to suppose that Thor has his magic belt, for st. 7 can hardly be explained otherwise:

Harðvaxnar lét harðar
halllands of sik falla [2]
gatat njótr hin neytri [3]
niarð- ráð fyr sér -gjarðar.

---

[1] If one wishes to argue as Miss *Gras* does, one may say that the poet had too high an opinion of Loki to represent him as a coward, who was dragged through the river suspended at Thor's waistbelt; this was a rôle more fit for the servant Þjálfi.

[3] I adopt *Kock*'s text (NN § 449), although I do not agree with his translation. But I have not found a better solution. The text of *Jónsson* seems to me impossible.

[1] I leave out the word *maðr*, because it is superfluous in the metrical scheme. Is it perhaps a distorted dittography of *niarð* in the following line?

þverrir lét, nema þyrri
þorns barna sér, Mǫrnar
snerriblóð, til svíra
salþaks megin vaxa.

The exact interpretation of the stanza is doubtful[1], but we may give the following translation: »Thor endured the fierceness of the river; the god of the belt did not find a useful way of defending himself, but then he said: if the rushing blood of the giantess does not end, I shall allow my strength to grow as high as heaven». I think it probable that he does this by means of his magic belt: then it is of importance that he is called in the preceding lines *Njótr njarðgjarðar* (according to Kock: *Njótr gjarðar*). This kenning is used purposely and shows the god in possession of his belt which will now be necessary for him.[2]

Hence we may conclude, that Thor went to Geirrøðr without his hammer. But when he has arrived in the giant's hall and has played the play with the red-hot bolt, the poet proceeds (st. 19):

Glaums niðjum fór gumna
gramr með dreyrgum hamri.[3]

Now, quite unexpectedly, he smashes the giants in his usual way with his hammer. It seems probable to me, that he gets his hammer in the hall of the giant, therefore quite the same idea as is expressed in the þrymskviða. The parallelism between the two mythical tales goes even farther:

---

[1] Cf. *E. A. Kock*, NN § 449—450 and *K. Reichardt*, Studien zu den Skalden des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts, p. 207 sqq.

[2] Perhaps of the kenning *Marnar snerribloð* the same may be said: the river is the blood of the giantess, because it is she who sends forth the gushing water. If this is right, then Eilífr has known the same myth about the giant's daughter Gjálp, as Snorri relates.

[3] Cf. *Kock* NN § 466.

here as well as in the Eddic poem he goes with one companion and this companion is Loki. Snorri has not told the end of the tale, because with the death of Geirrøðr the most stirring part is over. He does not relate a myth for the sake of its religious meaning, but only as a queer interesting tale of former ages, by which obscure kennings may be explained.

I arrive at the following conclusion. The myth of Geirrøðr has been told in two different poems. First a poem in fornyrðislag with many proper-names and several details. Then in the skaldic poem of Eilífr, as usual hazy as to the exact form of the myth, but told with great skill in stylistic matters. In the original myth Thor went together with Loki to a giant, where he gets back his hammer after having smashed the trolls to atoms. Perhaps this myth itself is only a »mythological tale», built upon the well-known idea, that the thundergod sometimes has to visit the giants to regain his weapon.[1] On this material a poet could invent a tale, making use of motives common to stories about a fight with the giants. But this is of less importance for my purpose; I am content with the result, that in this mythical tale Loki is the companion of Thor.

2. The myth of the giant-builder.

In the Gylfaginning (ch. 41) Snorri tells a curious tale, how the gods made a bargain with a giant to build Ásgarðr for them. The castle had to be finished within one year;

---

[1] Haggarty Krappe has explained the wading of the swollen river as a myth about the arrival of the god of fertility in spring, carried by a sea-giant unto the land (Études de mythologie et de folklore germaniques p. 79—99). If this might be true, then the tale as it is actually told in Eilífr's poem and in the Snorra Edda is a very distorted form of the original myth and has hardly any more meaning than that of a motive.

then the architect would receive as his reward the sun and the moon and moreover the goddess Freyja. With the help of his horse Svaðilfœri[1] he gets on with such speed, that the gods are afraid of his success and they compel Loki to thwart him in his work. Loki changes himself into a mare and entices the giant's horse to run away with him. The giant seeing that he is the dupe of the cunning of the gods becomes furious, but happily Thor arrives to smash him to pieces. After some time Loki foals a miraculous horse, the famous Sleipnir.

At the end of this narrative Snorri quotes two stanzas of the Vǫluspá, which tally with the tale as he records it and which he has even used in his paraphrasis of the myth. Scholars have drawn attention to several small incongruities in the tale, by which it seems to be proved that Snorri, as he was wont to do, has rearranged the myth into its present form. It will be sufficient to refer to the articles of the Swedish folklorist *C. W. von Sydow* about the Scandinavian folk-tale of Finn[2], where a critical analysis of the Old-Norse myth has been given and the folkloristic material compared. He arrives at the following conclusion: the popular tale current about the building of different churches in Norway and Sweden has originated in Northern Scandinavia, most likely in Swedish Norrland (Jämtland?). Its original however is a heathen myth, of which we have a distorted form in the Snorra Edda. He is furthermore of opinion that Loki and his trick with Svadilfœri does not belong to the myth, but that Thor is originally the real hero of the story. By comparing the tale of the Snorra Edda, the two stanzas of the

---

[1] See for the form Svaðilfœri in stead of Svaðilfari: *H. Pipping:* Eddastudier II (Studier i Nordisk Filologi XVII, 3) p. 19.

[2] Studier i Finnsägnen och besläktade byggmästarsägner, in the Swedish periodical Fataburen 1907, pp. 65—78, 199—218 and 1908, pp. 19—27.

Vǫluspá and the frame of the Alvíssmál, he constructs the following primitive form:

> Thor (or the gods) have a building made by a giant. The work must be finished in three nights (or in one night) and the giant's reward will be Freyja (or Thor's daughter) and moreover the sun and the moon as well. The work proceeds very fast and then Thor delays the giant by a conversation, until the sun rises in the morning and the giant (as well as his horse) are changed into stones.

It can not be denied that this is a sagacious solution of the problem, but it is after all nothing but a mere hypothesis, which presents moreover several weak points. If we compare this original form with the Eddic tale, we find that the way, in which the giant is delayed, is quite foreign to the myth; it is borrowed from the Alvíssmál, but von Sydow failed to prove that the frame of this poem has anything to do with this myth. It is a poor trick of the gods to stop the giant in his work by a simple conversation; what kind of conversation they held, Von Sydow leaves it wisely undecided, Finally there is in this reconstruction no place for the horse, although it forms a prominent part in the heathen myth.

If we, on the other hand, compare Von Sydow's original form with the popular tales, we find no less important deviations. The giant is not delayed by a conversation, but he is frustrated in his work by the mentioning of his name. Von Sydow supposes the influence of an other folktale (the type of Titeliture), but then, if we compare other popular forms of the tale, that have not been influenced by the Titeliture-tale, we never find the solution of Von Sydow's hypothetical tale. There is one more important difficulty. In the myth the giant requires as his reward sun, moon and Freyja[1]; in the popular tale we find as his claim either the sun and the moon, or Saint Olaf, who wants the church to be built. Only if Olaf would be able to guess the troll's name, the pact would be dissolved.[1]

---

[1] *H. Pipping*, Studier i Nordisk Filologi XVII (1926), 3, p. 81 is of opinion that the gods promised to give celestial bodies and

Here is clearly an accumulation of motives. The guessing of the name, as belonging to the Titeliture-type, may be dismissed at once. But then there still remains a choice between the sun or moon on the one hand, on the other the person of Saint Olaf. This is illogical and moreover it finds no support in the tale itself. One might object that Olaf, although a saint, has not the power to dispose of the celestial bodies. In popular tales, found in Scandinavia as well as further abroad, the reward of the giant (or the devil) is the soul of the man who wants the building to be done. I am of opinion, that in the tale of the saint the motive of the sun and the moon does not belong at all, but that it is borrowed from an other tale, where the actor is a being, who is able to dispose of sun and moon. This is of course a myth, where a god gives the commission. Hence the special form of the Scandinavian tale about the giant-architect has been influenced by a myth; in this way we are able to account for the deviations from the typical form. This, however, does not imply, that the tale as a whole goes back to the heathen myth; on the contrary we must try to find out, what may have been the form of the original tale, that lies at the bottom of the Eddic myth, as well as of the Scandinavian folk-tale.

Now tales about supernatural beings, trying to make a

---

that accordingly Freyja means the planet Venus. As this explication is of no particular value for my discussion of the tale, I shall not enter here upon a criticism of this opinion, although I do not agree with it.

[1] Cf. besides the examples given by *Von Sydow* also *Storaker-Fuglestvedt*, Folkesagn samlede i Lister og Mandals Amt p. 100 Nr. 138; *Skar*, Gamalt or Sætesdal III, p. 41 and IV, p. 14; Finlands Svenska Folkdiktning VII, 1, p. 561. Also *Bolte-Polívka* I, p. 495.

palace, a road or a dike, abound in all parts of the world. They are commonly connected with natural phenomena, such as curiously shaped rocks or a row of stones through a lake; and as these only present an imperfect likeness to a well-finished edifice, usually the tale supposes that the spirit is thwarted in his efforts. As spirits do their work at night, the sunrise is the moment, when they must be ready; if one stone still remains to be put in place, the spirit has been unable to finish his task. In a tale from Wallonia the devil has to make a road in the course of one night; but when he came hurrying along with the last stone, he was surprised by the rising sun. He tumbled down with the rock and fled to hell, leaving the road unfinished and the stone with the imprints of his claws.[1] In stead of the rising of the sun itself a more poetic motive is sometimes chosen: the first cry of a bird, announcing the coming day. In a German tale a devil makes a contract to build a mill: after midnight he fetched the miller to show him that the work was finished. But the man saw one stone wanting and immediately the devil flew away to fetch an other. But just at the moment he came back, the cock of the village Loffenau began to crow and in his fury the devil flung the stone at the mill, which was utterly destroyed.[2]

The tale becomes more dramatical, if the human being by his cunning succeeds in outwitting the devil. Both forms of the tale could be remodelled to this purpose. In a Javanese tale[3] a man must make a dike in a single night through the river Senggarung. He begins the task with the aid of the spirits. At midnight the work is nearly finished; then a pandit begins to mutter prayers and succeeds in causing the sun to break through the clouds. The spirits are compelled to flight.

---

[1] Cf. *G. Laport*, Le folk-lore des paysages de Wallonie (FFComm Nr. 84) p. 66. This tale may be the truncated form of a fuller tale, where a man causes the night to finish earlier; but this is not likely, as the countless tales of giants turned into stones by their being surprised by the first rays of the sun prove that this a quite sufficient solution of the problem.

[2] Cf. *Schreiber*, Sagen aus den Rheingegenden II, p. 132 sqq.

[3] Cf. *Knebel*, Tijdschrift voor Indische taal-, land- en volkenkunde XXXVII, p. 499—500.

The second form lends itself much easier to this remodelling of the tale. Then the farmer or his wife goes to the poultry-run and awakens the cock, who at once begins to crow. It is unnecessary to quote examples of this tale which is found in different parts of Europe.[1] It needs no further argument, that there are still more possibilities of preventing the spirit from finishing the imposed task.[2]

In these tales the human being, who accepts the aid of the devil, commonly has to pay for it with his soul. If the spirit succeeds the man must except to become its prey. This can of course be explained by the wellknown sacrifice of a human being on occasion of the foundations of a building or a bridge being laid.[3] As I had already the opportunity to point out, in the different variants of the Finn-tale the spirit requires the same reward; as a variant from Swedish-Finland expresses it very nicely, he must be rewarded »me månaskin o mannablod».[4]

---

[1] For Germany see: *Müllenhoff*, Sagen Nr. 412; for Belgium: *De Cock-Teirlinck*, Brabantsch Sagenboek Nrs. 232—238; for France: *Sébillot*, Le Folklore de France I, p. 378, II, p. 332, IV, p. 126; for Hungary: *Ipolyi*, Zeitschr. für deutsche Mythologie und Sittenkunde II, p. 255. In another connection the same trick is found among the African Peoples of the Sudan, cf. *Frobenius*, Atlantis VIII, p. 119 and 122.

[2] In a Mexican tale a man, who must build a house, gets the help of different animals. An animal, that shrieks very dreadfully, is compelled to cry. The llama's, terrified by the noise, cast down their loads and so the task can not be finished (cf. *Krickeberg*, Märchen der Azteken und Inkaperuaner, p. 264).

[3] Cf. my paper in the *Dutch* periodical Volkskunde XXXII (1927), p 1—13.

[4] Finlands Svenska Folkdiktning VII, 1, p. 561.

We have not yet succeeded in finding out the exact form of the tale underlying the Eddic myth as well as the Scandinavian folk-tale; if we want to penetrate farther into the problem, we must now turn again to the form Snorri has given in his Gylfaginning. In his above mentioned paper Von Sydow has made a thorough analysis of Snorri's account, to which I may refer the reader; but I wish to discuss one question,which the Swedish scholar has not thought necessary to put:what is the exact relation between Snorri's paraphasis and the two stanzas of the Vǫluspá? Nearly all who have given their opinion about this myth accept without any hesitation the fact, that in both traditions the same tale is meant, and accordingly they explain the enigmatical allusions of the Vǫluspá by the details found in the much fuller account of Snorri.

At any rate the problem may be raised. In his account Snorri inserts a paraphrasis of the two stanzas of the Vǫluspá. By juxtaposition this will become quite evident.

Snorra Edda	Vǫluspá st. 25
I. (p. 42) Þá settusk goðin á dómstóla sína ok leituðu ráða ok spurði hverr annan, hverr því hefði ráðit at gipta Freyju í Jǫtunheima eða spilla loptinu ok himinum svá at taka þaðan sól ok tungl ok gefa jǫtnum.	Þá gengo regin ǫll á rǫkstóla, ginnheilog goð ok um þat gættoz hverir hefði lopt allt lævi blandit eða ætt iǫtuns Óðs mey gefna.
II. En er æsirnir sá þat til víss at þar var bergrisi kominn, þá varð eigi þyrmt eiðunum ok kǫlluðu þeir á Þór, ok jafnskjótt kom hann, ok því næst fór á lopt hamarrinn Mjǫllnir	st. 26 Þórr einn þar vá þrunginn móði — hann sialdan sitr er hann slíkt um fregn! — á genguz eiðar orð ok sœri, mál ǫll meginlig er á meðal fóro.

A few observations will not be out of place.[1]

1. The coming together of the gods to talk about the cause of the impending calamity is quite incomprehensible: half a page before we read: *Þá gengu æsirnir á tal ok réðum ráðum sínum ok var þat kaup gǫrt við smiðinn, at hann skyldi eignask þat, er hann mælti til . . .*» The gods apparently knew very well how it came about that they were on the point of losing Freyja together with the sun and the moon. In their second discussion the gods come to the conclusion that Loki was again the cause of the mischief; it could hardly have been otherwise, as we have been duly informed that the gods had allowed the giant to make use of his horse, *en því réð Loki er þat var til lagt við hann.* So the gods need not come together to discuss a matter they ought to know all about. Snorri is too good an author to have made this bad arrangement by inadvertance; he has tried to fit in the stanza of the Vǫluspá on a place where it really does not belong. Moreover the stanza does not tell anything about the sun and the moon; Snorri has smoothed away the difficulty by paraphrasing the line *hverir hefði lopt allt lævi blandit* with the words: *hverr því hefði ráðit at . . . spilla loptinu ok himninum svá at taka þaðan sól ok tungl.* But he makes two mistakes: 1. *lævi blandit* means charged with noisome venom[2], not at all spoil the air by taking away the sun and the moon.

2. The Vǫluspá makes allusion to something which has taken place at the moment the gods were holding their

---

[1] For further details I may refer the reader to the excellent criticism of *Robert Höckert* in his books »Vǫluspa och Vanakulten» I and II. Perhaps it may be thought a reinforcement of my view upon this question that I came to my opinion about the relation between the stanzas of the Vǫluspá and the tale in the Snorra Edda, before having read the argument of *Höckert.*

[2] I quote here the translation of Vigfusson and York Powell in their Corpus poeticum boreale I, p. 196.

council; in the Gylfaginning the disaster is only feared as being in the near future.[1]

I am convinced that Snorri has given a wrong interpretation of the stanza. In his tale the giant will be rewarded in a double way 1. by the daughter of Óðr and 2. by the sun and the moon. The latter condition belongs to the tale of the giant-builder, the former has been borrowed from the stanza of the Vǫluspá. Hence we are able to reduce the puzzling complexity of the giant's reward into a more simple form, that moreover quite agrees with the popular tale about Finn.

II. According to stanza 26 Thor as the only one of the gods fights the foes, obviously the giants (*ætt iǫtuns* in st. 25). But by doing so all sworn oaths are broken. If this aims at the tale of the giant-builder, we are again confronted with a difficulty, which becomes painfully felt in Snorri's analysis. The giant has already been thwarted in his plan, because Loki has deprived him of his horse, and consequently the giant has not finished his task. Hence there is no necessity whatever to break all these sacred oaths, the gods are freed from their promise. Snorri has felt the difficulty and he has tried to mend it, by saying that the giant became furious and menaced the gods. But then the gods were right in summoning Thor, because not they, but the giant himself had broken the pact between them. Snorri is a brilliant story-teller and he has contrived to make things as good as possible; but here the task was really too difficult. On the other hand the stanza of the Vǫluspá does not tally with the tale of the giant-builder. When I read the whole context, beginning with st. 21, I get the impression that after the serious trouble between the Vanir and the Æsir the question with the giant-builder is indeed too slight a matter to justify such exceedingly high-flown language as *á gengoz eiðar orð ok sœri, mál oll meginleg er á meðal fóro.* This, however, is only a quite subjective feeling about the stylistic value of the expression; I do not wish to use it as an argument. This is only of importance for the interpretation of the Vǫluspá, to which I shall return presently; as to the tale of Snorri I think no more proofs will be required for my opinion that the stanzas of the Vǫluspá do not belong to it.

---

[1] There is no possible way of escaping this contradiction; the remarks of *S. Nordal*, Völuspa, p. 63 only prove how desperate the situation is for those who wish to reconcile the Vǫluspá and the Snorra-Edda.

The original form of the tale has become somewhat clearer. The giant proposes to make a castle for the gods; he asks as his reward the sun and the moon, naturally because he can keep them well enclosed in order that the giants may enjoy an everlasting darkness. But how has he been tricked? The folk-tale inserts the motive of the name-taboo, but this can not be correct as it adds a new element to the existing scheme and prevents the other ones from being developed in a satisfactory way. The Snorra Edda mentions the trick with the horse, which Von Sydow rejects as not original. But his solution that the giant is delayed by a conversation is so utterly devoid of epic character, that it must be rejected also. The question remains: does the horse belong to the myth or not?

Snorri tells the tale on account of the horse Sleipnir. This is a fact, not sufficiently taken into consideration. The chapter begins with the question: »*Hverr á Þann hest Sleipni eða hvat er frá honom at segja?*» And at the end it is told, that Loki is with young after his affair with Svaðilfœri; then a colt is born, the famous Sleipnir. Snorri wishes to relate a myth about Sleipnir and from this standpoint we must judge the whole chapter. We may ask: what did he know about it? If we do not wish to suppose, that Snorri has drawn from inexhaustable mythical sources, but think it more probable that he has known on the whole the same mythological traditions, as have come down to us, the answer is not difficult to find. He must have known the Hyndluljóð, as he quotes from it in his Edda, and here he could read in stanza 40:

Ól ulf Loki við Angrboðo
en Sleipni gat við Svaðilfara.

A tradition existed about Sleipnir being born from Loki, the other parent being Svaðilfari. Whether this was a horse or a human being is not clear from this stanza, but considering the character of Loki it was not impossible to presume that Sleipnir had been begotten by a mare, as one of his parents moreover must have been of horse-breed. But after all this single line of the short Vǫluspá was too meagre for a full-blown myth of Sleipnir. I suppose Snorri sought for a myth, in which Loki as well as a horse played a rôle. Evidently he found the tale of the giant-builder fit for this purpose which implies that here both were to be found. If we accept the opinion of Von Sydow that Loki was subsequently added, we must at any rate imagine an original form of the giant-builder's tale with the motive of a horse. Now in the popular forms of the Finn-tale a horse is not mentioned at all; if we conclude that in the original form of the Eddic myth the horse did not appear either, then we are confronted by the difficulty as to how Snorri hit upon the idea of introducing a horse into the story, where it had nothing to do and how he contrived to use this horse as one of the principal actors. It is for this reason that I am more willing to suppose the existence of a myth with a horse.

Von Sydow has referred to an Irish tale, where a horse is found.[1] A Saint, St Mogue or Aidan, wants to build a church and he built it in the course of one night. He had the help of a grey horse, that brought the materials from a mountain. Now it is the devil who prevents the completion of the building. As von Sydow observes, the tale is out of joint, as devil and saint have changed their places. But we may infer from this variant, that in an original form the giant-builder made use of a horse. Did this horse play any rôle in the tale? Not necessarily, for the only reason for its being mentioned may have been that the rocks with which the folk-tale was connected suggested the form of a horse. This may have been the case in Ireland as well as in Norway; hence both tales may have originated quite independently. Then there has been in Norway somewhere a variant of the folk-tale, where the giant had the help of a horse, and it is only natural that in course of time this horse was also given an active part.

---

[1] Fataburen 1908, p. 23.

As to the transition between myth and folk-tale, we grope in the dark. Surely Snorri has known a story about the building of Asgard; there is no reason to suppose that he had access to a poem, which now is irretrievably lost, for he does not quote any stanza from it, although he mentions two stanzas from the Vǫluspá. He probably knew the myth from oral tradition. It must have told about the building of Asgard by a giant, who asked as his wages the sun and the moon. The giant had a horse to help him. How was he frustrated in his efforts? If we consider the different motives, used in this kind of tale, we will see that they do not fit in at all. The name-taboo is quite out of question. The trick of making the cock crow does not seem very appropriate for a story staged among the gods. Finally the giant being delayed till dawn is a motive without any epic value, if we do not hear in which way the delay was caused. Here, obviously, the horse may very usefully fill the gap in our reconstruction of the tale.

Hence it was on account of the horse, that the giant failed to succeed. One of the gods apparently has laid a trap for the giant by means of this horse. Was he Loki or Thor? Von Sydow supposes that it was the latter, because he is mentioned in the 26th stanza of the Vǫluspá and he cheats a dwarf by means of a learned conversation about mythological problems. But if the connection with the Vǫluspá must be denied and if we do not accept the reconstruction of the plot of the Alvíssmál as suggested by Von Sydow, we must take an other view of the question. Indeed, Thor plays no part whatever in the myth of the giant-builder; he first appears at the end, but here only as the result of Snorri's combination with the Vǫluspá-stanza. So only Loki remains. And I must confess that the rôle of a cunning god, who by a trick entices the horse away from the giant, is much more in accordance with the character of Loki than of Thor. Loki, who is so well trained in all kinds of metamorphoses, changed himself into a mare in order to induce the giant's horse to run riot in the woods. The birth of Sleipnir as a result of Loki's trick is, however, an arbitrary combination of Snorri or of one of his predecessors.

The tale, the contents of which I have tried to reconstruct, does not make the impression of a genuine heathen myth.[1] First the question, how Asgard was built, arises more from curiosity than from real belief. Then the solution of the problem is rather burlesque; after all the gods were left with an unfinished castle. Hence it must have been a pure invention sprung from the brain of a mythographer. Then why not attribute it to the man who has recorded it? Indeed, this is not all impossible. Still I do not accept this solution, because it does not agree with the working method of Snorri, who is more of a compilator and an arranger of traditions than an inventor. If Snorri had himself composed the myth, only to explain the origin of Sleipnir, the name of a falsificator might be applied to him and it would not do credit to the earnestness of his intentions with regard to his handbook for poets.

---

[1] Cf. also *K. Krohn*, Übersicht über einige Resultate der Märchenforschung, FFCommunications Nr 96 p. 114—122, who arrives at nearly the same conclusion; whether the myth goes back to a Christian legend or to a popular tale, is of course difficult to decide.

And finally, what is the result of our investigation for the appreciation of Loki? Very small, indeed. Loki is again the cunning god, appearing in the well-known rôle of the man, who gives bad advice and afterwards has to remedy the dangers issuing from it. It is again the same Loki as in the myth of Geirrøðr or of Iðunn; a figure more at home in a novellistic tale than in a real myth.

Although the question as to how the two stanzas 25 and 26 of the Vǫluspá must be explained, is of no importance whatever to the problem of Loki, the reader may expect, that an author, who rejects the commonly accepted explanation of their meaning, would present a new solution of them in stead of it. I will not exempt myself from this duty. If it may be considered as a reinforcement of my position, that I am not alone in my opinion, I may mention the suggestive book »Vǫluspá och Vanakulten» published by Robert Höckert. Still it can not be said that he has given a satisfactory solution, the more so as his general views about the meaning of the Vǫluspá are open to serious doubt. And in particular the idea, that in st. 25 the question *hverr hefði lopt allt lævi blandit* ought to be answered with »Othin», because he has induced the giants to work mischief by surrendering the goddess of fertility to them, is a suggestion, that is very ingenious, but still far from proved.

The stanzas 25—26 are commonly considered as the consequence of the preceding ones. There has been a war between the Vanir and Æsir, in which the stronghold of the latter has been destroyed. Hence they want a new castle, which a giant promises to build for them, if they give sun, moon and Freyja to him. The sequence of the stanzas is not satisfactory and Nordal is inclined to suppose that one or two stanzas are missing here[1] But there are other and more serious objections. How is it possible that the Æsir, after having been conquered by the Vanir, promise the Vanaguð Freyja as a reward for the giant's undertaking? Are we to suppose that meanwhile the treaty between the Vanir and the Æsir has been concluded according to which Njǫrðr, Freyr and Freyja pass into the ranks of the Æsir?[2] If so who are the remaining Vanir? And how could Othin be inclined to arouse the wrath of the Vanir afresh by giving up Freyja to the giants?

I think these questions may suffice to show the host of difficulties meeting the generally accepted explanation. The real meaning of the preceding stanzas 21—24 is still obscure, in spite of the ingenious interpretations by Nordal and Van Hamel.[3] It is not even certain, that they really are connected with the war between the Æsir and the Vanir at all; the criticism of this view given by E. Mogk[4] is worth serious consideration. It is at any rate rather suspicious that the solemn lines about the gods united in council are repeated with such a very small space between (st. 23, 1—4 and 25, 1—4). Moreover the stanzas 23—24 and 25—26 seem to form two parallel groups, each consisting of one stanza telling about the meeting of the gods, and a second one about a god who begins a fierce fight (Othin in st. 24, Thor in st. 26). Hence it is quite possible that they belong to parallel traditions and that only one of these groups originally had a place in the Vǫluspá. It can not be said beforehand if st. 23—24 or st. 25—26 are spurious. The line *þat var enn folkvíg fyrst í heimi* (st. 24, 3—4), a terrible »crux interpretationis», may be adduced as an argument against the originality of st. 23—24.

---

[1] Völuspa p. 61. This view is accepted by *Van Hamel*, Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi XLII, p. 331.

[2] Cf. Ynglingasaga ch. 4.

[3] *Van Hamel* in the above-quoted paper combines st. 22 with the myth of *Othin*'s disappearance as told in ch. 3 of the Ynglingasaga (Cf. also the same author in Neophilologus XVI, p. 203). I consider this combination extremely doubtful. In the Ynglingasaga Frigg is simply taken by the gods Vilir and Vé (þa tóku þeir baðir at eiga). This is not adultery at all, but, as Othin is thought dead, simply a case of levirate. This does not agree with *Van Hamel*'s interpretation of st. 22 of the Vǫluspá, that Gullveig enticed Frigg to become the wife of her brothers-in-law during her husband's absence. In the Ynglingasaga Othin accepts the state of affairs on his return; he simply takes his wife back without showing any resentment. In the Vǫluspá Othin can not bear the insult and wages war, not against his brothers, but against the Vanir. — Cf. also *H. Schück*, Studier i Nordisk Litteratur- och Religionshistoria II, p. 190 sqq.

[2] FFCommunications Nr. 51, p. 5.

In the light of these considerations we may ask if it would not be better to arrive at an understanding of the stanzas 25—26 solely on the basis of their contents. We learn the following things: 1. The air has been poisoned by supernatural beings (*hverir* in R is a reading, not to be dismissed as lightly as scholars are inclined to do), 2. Freyja is given to the giants. 3. Thor is the only one who dares to fight, 4. By doing so the most sacred oaths are broken.

If we read these lines quite unbiassed, we are reminded of several wellknown Scandinavian myths. The giants are always seeking to possess Freyja. In ch. 17 of the Skaldskaparmál Hrungnir threatens to take Freyja and Sif away; the Eddic poem Þrymskviða is based upon the motive, that Freyja is to be married to a giant.[1] Obviously the meaning of this myth is the following: the goddess of fertility disappears during winter from the earth and goes to the realm of the giants. That means the temporal victory of these demons, who are now able to send snow- and hailstorms by which the air loses its propitious qualities for cultivation

---

[1] Although this poem is very recent (cf. my paper in the Tíjdschrift voor Nederlandsche taal- en letterkunde XLVII, p. 251—322) the motive itself may be much older of course.

(cf. *lævi blandit*[1] in line 25, 5—6). In spring-time Thor has the task of destroying the power of the giants; the mythical expression varies: he goes to fight the trolls, he goes to fetch back his hammer (Þrymskviða) or Freyja (st. 26 of the Vǫluspá).

If such a myth is meant, the enigmatical stanzas of the Vǫluspá become intelligible. There is only one detail, we have not yet explained: the terrible oaths broken by Thor's attack. But this motive is again of wide occurrence: in fact he often seems to be willing to disregard the oaths of the other divinities (*hann sialdan sitr er hann slíkt um fregn*). It is related in the Lokasenna, that Loki only leaves the feast of the gods, because Thor threatens to slay him with his hammer. He calls his weapon here *Hrungnis bani*, and it is very remarkable that we find the same motive in the myth of this giant. In ch. 17 of Skáldskaparmál Snorri tells that Hrungnir, while persecuting Othin, comes in Asgard, where the gods invite him to drink. Of course *grið* must have been promised to him.[2] During the ensuing feast Hrungnir says that he intends to transfer Walhalla to the realm of the giants, to kill all the gods and to take Freyja and Sif to his home. The gods then call on Thor for help. He comes into the hall and asks why the giant sits at the table of the Æsir and who has given him *grið*. Othin has been compelled to do so, but Thor answers again *at þess boðs skal Hrungnir iðrask, áðr hann komi út.* Hence obviously he does not intend *at þyrma eiðunum*, and if in this case he does not swing the terrible Mjǫlnir, it is only because an other tale of Hrungnir has been added to this one.

There are some striking similarities in the general structure of the tale between the Hrungnir-myth and the stanzas 25—26 of Vǫluspá. We may surmise, that a tradition has existed about Freyja's sojourn with the giants and her deliverance by Thor contrary to all sworn oaths. Ordinarely the myths tell only about the danger of Freyja's leaving the gods, apparently because in the mythological schematization Freyja always belongs to the principal deities. But the Vǫluspá is interesting because it represents Freyja really in the might of the demons. The idea of a regularly repeated sojourn with the demoniac powers, as is so clearly expressed by the Greek myth of Persephone, has not been preserved in Old-Norse tradition. It has been turned into a fact, that occurred only once and that accordingly must have taken place in a very remote past. It is difficult to say where it exactly fits into the mythical history of the gods, because the Old-Norse tradition never did arrive at a definitely developed system of cosmogony and eschatology. The poet of the Vǫluspá has made an effort in this direction. Perhaps the place of the stanzas 25—26, if it be accepted as the right one, may give us further indications about the proper meaning of this tale in connection with the other parts of the poem: it would be quite out of place to prolong this digression here, which has detained us too long in pursuing the subject of this paper: *viz.* the problem of Loki.

---

[1] Cf. *Höckert*'s interpretation in Vǫluspá och Vanakulten p. 107.

[2] It is not said expressly but later on Thor asks *hverr seldi Hrungni grið.*

3. Other myths of Loki as companion of Thor.

In the humorous tale about Thor's visit to see the giant-king Utgarðaloki which Snorri tells at full length and with evident pleasure in his Gylfaginning[1], Loki and Þjálfi are the companions of the thundergod. This story is a curious example of the so-called »Mythenmärchen», with special stress upon the second part of the word. *C. W. von Sydow* has made it the object of a thorough investigation, published in the Danske Studier[1] and he came to the very convincing conclusion that this cycle of tales was highly influenced by Celtic tradition.[2] This seems to me at any rate quite in accord with that part of the tale, where Loki is mentioned, that is, in the contests that take place in the giant's hall. But for the eating-contest of Loki itself Von Sydow is unable to produce a Celtic example, and therefore he supposes, that this may be a quite independent product of a Scandinavian poet's fancy.

---

[1] Ch. 43—46.

Loki's contest is the following: he is placed before a trough with meat, at the other end of which on the side of the giants Logi is placed. The one who succeeds in eating first half of the vessel, will be the winner. They meet each other in the exact middle of the trough, but while Loki has eaten only the meat, Logi has swallowed meat and bones and even the wooden vessel itself. Loki is ignominiously defeated, but he may have found consolation in the fact that his opponent was fire itself (*villieldr* as Snorri calls it).

Logi as the opponent of Loki has given food to the supposition that Loki himself was a fire-demon as well. It is not necessary to discuss this opinion, as Miss Gras has lately made some good remarks about it.[3] But she goes rather far in her own conclusion, when she says: »if Loki in popular tradition had been accepted as a fire-demon, he could not have played this rôle, because in this case he could not have been the losing party». This holds good, as long as the source from which this is drawn, is a real myth, but when it is only a pleasant tale about gods and giants, the real proportions may be distorted. This author wants to show us the uncommon view of the gods being made utterly ridiculous by the giants. He even goes as far as to say that Thor can not lift the pseudo-worldsnake from the floor, although it is a well-known myth that he succeeded in fishing it up from the bottom of the ocean. When Thor in other poems, like the Hymiskviða and the Þrymskviða, pays a visit to the giants, his appetite is so extraordinary that the trolls are quite at a loss what to do. Here, however, he is presented with a goblet of mead and he only contrives to drink a nearly imperceptible quantity. In truth, only such an irresponsible joker as this author must have been, could have hit upon the idea of telling about a contest between the fire-god and a fire-demon, in which the former was defeated.

---

[1] Tors färd till Utgard, Danske Studier 1910, p. 65—105 and 145—182.

[2] The opposite view has been defended by *F. von der Leyen* in *Paul* und *Braune*'s Beiträge XXXIII (1908) p. 382—390 and Deutsches Sagenbuch I, p. 201, who says that the Eddic story was turned into a melancholy folk-tale in Ireland. *A. Wesselski* is of the same opinion, cf. his Versuch einer Theorie des Märchens p. 59. For reasons given below I accept the explanation of *Von Sydow*.

[2] Cf. l. c. p. 46 sqq.

The author chose this form of contest, because he knew of a connection between Loki and the element of fire. Obviously this makes the jest of the whole insipid story. It does not follow, however, that Loki has been a fire-god in popular tradition, nor that this was his original significance; we only can assume, that the combination of the words *Loki* and *logi* was so very close at hand, that such a disrespectful fellow as the author of this novellette has been could use it as an excellent pun. Now we understand why Von Sydow could not find any parallel in Celtic tradition; this is a tale only to be imagined by a Scandinavian humorist.

This author knew that both Loki and Þjálfi occurred as the companions of the thundergod. Of course he found this idea in other myths. But it seems that in his opinion Þjálfi was the real servent of Thor, for the contest of this god with the mind was only significant if Þjálfi was renowned for swiftness this being a good characteristic of a servant and messenger. As to Loki he obviously could not find anything in real tradition which suggested a contest with a giant; so he had recourse to the name, sufficient proof for the poverty of the traditions about Loki as the companion of the thunder-god.

The same may be said about an other myth, where Thor and Loki together pay a visit to the giants. In the Þrymskviða a merry tale is told about their adventures. Scholars all agree in rejecting this farce as a real myth, although the poem itself is generally considered to be of rather high antiquity. The contradiction between these opinions does not exist for him who agrees with the present author in assigning this Eddic poem to a very recent date; for the numerous arguments in favour of this opinion I may refer the reader to my above-named paper on this subject. For the present it is only of importance to know where the poet got his material from.

Loki flying in the falcon-dress of Freyja is a motive we are already acquiainted with (§ IV, 2). The formal way, in which it is *lent*, seems to denote that the poet tries to give a plausible explanation for this interchanging of divine attributes. At the foundation of this motive lies perhaps the idea of Loki being capable of flying about in the guise of a bird; this is not strange because he has the power to assume all kind of animal shapes. Making use of a machinery for flying sounds somewhat materialistic and gives to Loki the appearance of a godlike Egill.

For the rest Loki is the cunning adviser of the gods, when they are in trouble. The contrast between the powerful Thor with his mighty force and his poor brains on the one side and the little, clever Loki on the other, is quite in accordance with the usual types of heroes in folk-tales. All mythical essence has evaporated from tales like this one, and they make more the impression of a »Märchen», trimmed up with some high-sounding hieratic names, than of an original myth, contaminated with or debased to a common folk-tale.

This presents to us the interesting problem about the relation between the Old-Norse myths and the »Märchen». After the investigations of F. von der Leyen [1] it has become quite clear that in the tales of Snorri and Saxo Grammaticus as well as in the Eddic poems, several reminiscences of popular tales are to be found. But not in the exact form of the current tradition, but only as separated, often queerly altered and arbitrarely combined motives. The reason of this curious fact is formulated by v. d. Leyen in this way: the Old-Norse poets heard the tales told to them, but because they were a fresh acquisition to the literary stock people were not prone to admit them to the holy precincts of mythological traditions. And these tales were new, because they spread from Asia in the early Middle-Ages, especially from India, throughout Europe and of course arrived only relatively late on the shores of the Baltic and the North Sea. These tales made a profound impression upon the Northern mind; they furnished new material for the adornment of worn-out myths, but the poets did not yet allow them to be treated on an equal footing with the old national traditions.

This conclusion has been accepted by several scholars. Still it is merely a theoretical reasoning without any support in the real facts of Old-Norse literature.[2] What we know is this: we find in the mythological tales several motives, that occur also in the »Märchen», but the »Märchen» itself is never reproduced in its unaltered form. The explanation of this singular fact is a matter of interpretation. One might argue that the motives themselves belong to literary property of most peoples and that it is not necessary to assume any influence resulting from the ocean of stories that continually poured over the frontiers of India. Hence they might be the result of what Bastian called the »Völkergedanken». And I do not think it unlikely that we might be compelled by future investigation to be more liberal towards the national literature of the European peoples. Moreover, if a motive properly belongs to a »Märchen», it does not follow, that it reached Scandinavia first about the eleventh century or even later. The Indian theory in its extravagant form has long been seriously shaken in its fundaments; »Märchen» may be composed even by other Indo-European peoples, they may be the property of the Germanic tribes as well. Each case has to be considered separately.

---

[1] Das Märchen in den Göttersagen der Edda (Berlin 1899).

[2] Cf. also the objections raised by *E. Ó. Sveinsson*, Verzeichniss isländischer Märchenvarianten FFC. No 83 p. XV.

But even if we admit the thesis of v. d. Leyen that India is the Klondyke of folk-tales, we are not compelled to follow his argumentation with regard to the mythological tales of the Scandinavians. People objected to admitting them unaltered into the old national traditions, because they were so very recent. I do not see the value of this argument. If they were unknown and interesting, why did the poets not retell them, adapted to the sphere of divine beings, where things of magic and wonder were not out of place? We might argue in the opposite way of v. d. Leyen: the poets did not accept them unchanged because they were common property; the public would too easily detect the real source of the poet's fiction. But if he only used some motives, placed in new surroundings or with some slight modifications, the reader might have got the agreeable impression of things unknown, that still at the same time were not quite foreign. If we argue in this way we could consider the curious appearance of folkloristic motives in Scandinavian mythology as a proof for the opinion, that the »Märchen» were widely current in the early Middle-Ages.

But this conclusion would be as unjustified as that of

v. d. Leyen. The mythological tales could not embody folk-tales in their unaltered form, because they are incompatible literary forms on the ground of their totally different character. We observe the same phenomenon elsewhere as well: as soon as the »Märchen» is introduced into higher literature, it must be remodelled and disintegrated to furnish material for unbiassed poetic fiction. This is but natural. The folk-tale is a complete scheme of action composed of folkloristic material, that is moulded into a solid form. It may be liable to contamination with other folk-tales; motives may be interchangeable; still on the whole the type of a folk-tale is relatively constant. Modifications are possible only in the sphere of folk-tradition. If the hero of the tale does not venture himself outside the world of wonder and chance, that constitutes the real scene of the »Märchen», it does not matter what kind of adventures he undergoes nor in which order they occur.

As soon as the folk-tale is admitted in higher forms of literature its shortcomings are evident. The necessity of psychological treatment of the persons, the craving for logical connection of the facts, that are the real distinctive marks of all higher literature are incompatible with the real character of the folktale; it can not but wither in this chill wind of stubborn reality. »This succession of facts can not remain unchanged, such a stupid conception of the chief actor is incomprehensible to a more cultivated mind», in such a way an author might argue, who wished to annex the variegated charms of the folk-tale to his proper domain. The only issue was to annihilate the folk-tale itself, in order to make free use of the constituent motives, which might be adaptated to any possible story.

The fact, that the later mythographers of Iceland were unable to insert complete folk-tales into the traditions about gods and demons, is only a proof of the vigour and briskness of this traditional literature; only when the old spirit is quite broken down and people consider myths to be some specific kind of wonder-tales, time has come to confuse completely two literary forms, that belong to different plans. The attitude of the Scandinavian mythology towards the »Märchen» can not furnish us with any indications about the period when the wandering folk-tales were introduced into Scandinavia.[1]

After having written these remarks about the relation between the Eddic myths and popular tales I had the opportunity to read the highly stimulating book of *Wesselski* »Versuch einer Theorie des Märchens». He defends the thesis that it is the myths that are original and that consequently the folk-tales are derived from them. Generally speaking this view may be accepted, but even then it remains quite possible that mythological stories, occurring in later literary tradition, are deeply influenced by popular tales, which in their turn may again be composed of motives detached from original myths. This seems to be particularly the case with the tale of Thor's journey to Utgarðaloki, which in its character is not at all popular: although it makes use of different current motives from mythology as well as from story-telling, it has such an allegorical character, that it must be considered in its present form as a purely literary work. The question remains then unsolved, whether this author got his material from Irish traditions or the Irish tales are themselves derived from the Icelandic story. The latter view seems to me rather improbable, because the Eddic tale belongs to a relatively late period of myth-making

---

[1] It is also worth consideration that with actual myth-borrowing the disintegration of the tale is a very common feature; cf. *P. Radin*, Literary Aspects of North American mythology in Canada Department of mines, Geological survey, museum Bulletin No. 16 (Ottawa 1915) p. 49—50: we have always to bear in mind that borrowing is a selective process. The problems connected with myth borrowing thus assume a far greater complexity than we are apt to give them.

viz. to the eleventh or even twelfth century, when the relations between Ireland and Scandinavia had become much less intensive, hence the opportunity for such a transfer of an Icelandic mythological story to Ireland seems to be wanting.

4. Loki as Thor's opponent.

In chap. 33 (35) of the Skáldskaparmál Snorri tells a curious tale about the hair of Sif. Loki has cut it off, out of pure malevolence. Thor is very angry about it and compells him to go to the *svartálfar* to get golden hair instead. The dwarfs Ivalda-synir are so complaisant to make besides the hair also Skíðblaðnir and Gungnir. Then Loki made a bet with two other dwarfs, that they would not be able to forge as splendid objects. They, however, begin successfully and make Gullinborsti and Draupnir. Now Loki, afraid that they will win, transforms himself into a fly and stings the dwarf, who handles the bellows. Indeed, the hammer Mjǫllnir is not quite faultless, for the shaft is too short. Still the gods, asked to give their verdict, consider the second set of objects superior to the first set. The dwarf wants to take the head of Loki, but he escapes. Thor, however, brings him back and then Loki says, that if the dwarf has the right to take his head, he must not touch his neck. Finally the dwarf sews the lips of Loki together.

This tale belongs to the most difficult problems of Scandinavian mythology. We have no parallel traditions whatever and we are thrown on an analysis of Snorri's text, which offers different puzzling contradictions. It is obvious, that this tale is a stew of different motives, as already *F. Ohrt* has pointed out.[1] There is no logical coherence between the different parts. The dwarfs are asked to make golden hair for Sif; why do they forge three objects? What is the reason of the competition between the two groups of dwarfs? Loki succeeds in thwarting the dwarf, how is it possible that the object, made under such circumstances, *er beztr af ǫllum gripunum?* What is the reason of Loki's escaping, followed by his being brought back by Thor? The shrewd remark of Loki, that the dwarf may not take hold of his neck, is a blunt motive, because Loki is not freed by it, but must subject himself to the sewing together of his lips. What is the meaning of this motive, to which no allusion can be found in any other literary work?

---

[1] Hammerens lyde — Jærnets last in Festskrift til Finnur Jónsson p. 294—298.

If Snorri's tale is composed of different originally independent motives, we must try to find the components. My attempt to make an analysis of this myth must needs be hypothetical; still it may be useful for a better understanding of the difficulties that face us here. The motive for Snorri's telling about this myth is the question, why gold is called *haddr Sifjar.* In fact this kenning is nowhere to be found in Old-Norse poetry; the only case that may be compared with it is a stanza of Bjarkamál, where we read *Sifjar svarðfestum*[1] but this stanza belongs, as we already had the occasion to observe (cf § IV, 3) to a very late interpolation.[2] Has Snorri found the kenning *haddr Sifjar* in a poem, that is lost to us, or has he himself substituted the simpler word *haddr* for the poetical term *svarðfestar?* And what is the meaning of this expression? The idea first enounced by Karl Weinhold[3] that the hair of Sif means »vegetation», is not at all improbable. Perhaps it is better to modify it in this way, that the golden hair is a mythical connotation of the ripe corn-ears, as J. G. von Hahn has suggested.[1] At any rate the much simpler explanation, proposed by Miss Gras, that it only means the beautiful golden hair of the Germanic women [5] is quite insufficient, as it does not explain, why the kenning mentions the hair of Sif and not of any other goddess.[2] If Sif's hair means »vegetation», cut off in harvest time and reappearing in spring, Loki is not a fire-demon, as the older explanations suggested, but more likely a chthonic deity, the relation between him and Sif being comparable with that between Hades and Persephone. But such a character of Loki is elsewhere unknown and we must leave the possibility open, that Loki originally has nothing to do with the myth of Sif's hair, but has been introduced afterwards to achieve the combination with the contest of the dwarfs.

---

[1] *F. Jónsson*, Skjaldedigtning I B, p. 171, st. 5.

[2] See also *A. Olrik*, Danmarks Heltedigtning I, p. 99, who dates the stanzas in the 12th century.

[3] Die Sagen von Loki, Zeitschrift für deutsches altertum VII (1849) p. 38.

Two groups of superhuman smiths each forge three mythical objects. These quite correspond to each other: a weapon of a god (Gungnir ~ Mjǫllnir), a property of Freyr (Skíðblaðnir ~ Gullinborsti), an object of gold (Draupnir ~ Sif's hair). We must conclude that this parallelism is intentional as there are no reasons for it in the character of the mythological objects themselves. Hence it is probable that one of the sets is original and the other is composed as its counterpart. Now the group Draupnir — Gullinborsti — Mjǫllnir is a logically correct triad, as it consists of important objects belonging to the three principal gods. This is not the case with the other group, where the hair of Sif strangely appears besides Skíðblaðnir and Gungnir. Moreover in this case we may find the reasons for the combinations. If a myth-teller wished to compose this new triad as an analogy to the other one, and if he wanted to combine it with the story about Sif's hair, his argument might have been the following. The hair of Sif, as an golden object, answers to the ring Draupnir of the pre-existing group. Gullinborsti leads of itself to the other famous property of Freyr Skíðblaðnir, about which st. 43 of Grimnismál says.

---

[1] Sagwissenschaftliche Studien (1876) p. 131 sqq.

[2] *R. M. Meyer*, Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte p. 306 says rightly: »Mythisch bedeutsam müssen ihre Haare wohl jedenfalls sein».

Ívalda synir gengo í árdaga
Skíðblaðni at skapa
skipa betst skírom Frey
nýtum Niarðar bur.

Here our mythographer found the name of the dwarfs, who made this precious object. Finally the third thing had to correspond with Thor's weapon; the spear of Othin was not difficult to hit upon.

In my opinion this is a possible solution of the problem. If we try the other way, we have to face much greater difficulties. For if the group Draupnir — Gullinborsti — Mjǫllnir is secundary, it is inexplicable that this forms a logical combination of precious divine things. Moreover, how did he find the names of the dwarfs Sindri and Brokkr? The first one occurs once in a stanza of the Vǫluspá, where it is said that he has a golden hall *á Niðavollom* (st. 37), strangely misinterpreted by Snorri as if Sindri were the name of the hall itself (Gylfaginning ch. 51). Brokkr is quite unknown. Hence there may have been a tradition about the origin of the principal accessories of the three chief gods, in which the dwarfs Brokkr and Sindri were mentioned.

But this is not sufficient to explain the details of the contest. These are mostly well-known folkloristic motives, although curiously distorted and even devoid of their original meaning. Loki as a fly appears in the myth of the Brisingaman, to be treated subsequently. His stinging of Brokkr has no effect, as the weapon of Thor is nonetheless excellent in the war with the giants, and because Sindri and Brokkr win the game. This is the reason why I can not see the similarity with the Finnish magic formula about the origin of »iron», pointed out by Ohrt. Here we read in a variant from Pohjanmaa[1]:

Herhiläinen Hiien lintu
katsovi katon rajasta,
ruotehesta ruijottavi.
Kantoi käärmehen kähyjä
rauan karkaisuvesihin.

This is not quite clear to me. What is the relation between the wasp and the snake-poison? Is this rhyme not rather an arbitrary combination of two different conceptions: 1. the idea of snake-poison in a weapon [2] and 2. the idea of the wasp as the devil's instrument?[3] Besides the correspondence with the Old-Norse myth is meagre. Here the fly stings the smith, but the wasp drops the poison into the tempering-water. The effect is also quite different; on the one side the slight fault in the hammer's shaft, on the other side the dangerous effect of iron weapons anf tools. I do not think that it is necessary to suppose any relation between the Finnish and Scandinavian traditions. In the Old-Norse myth the motive of Loki as a fly is a simple borrowing from the tale of the Brisingamen.

---

[1] *K. Krohn*, Suomalaiset syntyloitsut p. 81 (translation in FFC 52 p. 85).

[2] Cf. *Brot* af *Sigurðarkviða* st. 19: *eldi vóro eggiar útan gǫrvar, en eitrdropom innan fáðar.* Halfdanarsaga Eysteinssonar FAS III, p. 543. Also Beowulf 1459 *ecg wæs īren, ātertānum fāh* (and cf. *Klaeber*'s note to this line, to which may be added my Studiën over Færösche balladen p. 12 sq.). See also *Reichborn-Kjennerud*, Vår gamle Trolldomsmedisin (Vid. Akad. Oslo, Hist.-Fil. Kl. 1927 Nr. 6) p. 90.

[3] *K. Krohn*, Suomalaiset syntyloitsut p. 83 (FFC 52 p. 88) and *O. Dähnhardt*, Natursagen I, p. 165, 167, 188 sq, 334.

The shrewd answer of Loki may be a wandering motive, like the wellkown story of Shylock. For the sewing of Loki's lips I do not know any parallel; it may be suggested by the sharp and dangerous tongue of the caustic god.[1]

After this short discussion of Snorri's tale the impression of a wildly fantastic combination of motives can only be strengthened. Obviously Loki is the central-point in it. His character is not very clear-cut. He is a trickster, amusing himself in cutting the hair of a goddess. But he is compelled to repair the mischief, that he has done; we met with the same conception in the myths of Iðunn and the giant-builder. He has some connection with the dwarfs; but only very superficially: he is a messenger of Thor to these supernatural smiths and he succeeds in making a quarrel between two groups of them. It seems rather hasardous to conclude on the basis of this myth, that he belongs in some way or other to the dwarfs.[2] Finally he outwits the dwarfs by a sudden disappearance (frustrated again by Thor's intervention) and by a clever subterfuge. After all he is punished for his malevolence in a rather ridiculous way. This is all of no importance whatever and I see no reason to ascribe a particular value to these newfangled myths and even to give them the preference above the older sources, as Miss Gras wishes to do.[1]

---

[1] Cf. Miss *Gras* p. 69. We are reminded of the story told by Florus (Epitome II, 30) about the defeat of Varus: tandem, vipera, sibilare desisti.

[2] As Miss *Gras* p. 66—67 is inclined to accept. *F. Graebner* in a paper on »Thor und Maui» in Anthropos XIV—XV, p. 1106 compares Loki's defeat as patron of a family of dwarfish smiths with the Indian myth of Tvaštar and the Rbhus. This article, however, is a warning example against an ethnological method, that indulges in wild combinations and sweeping assertions without taking the trouble to ask what the real value of a literary tradition may be. If such a method pretends to give the clue to mythological problems, we can only emphatically reject it as superficial and misleading. But we should not judge the »kulturhistorische Methode» by this specimen of its application.

There is one remarkable circumstance: Loki is unfriendly towards Thor. First he offends the wife of the thundergod by cutting off her hair, and secondly he succeeds in damaging the weapon of Thor. It is seemingly a mere chance that the fault was of such slight importance; if Loki had had his will, the hammer might have been quite useless. I do not think that this conception is original; it is at any rate more probable that it arose from the contrast between the formidable god of muscular strength and the clever representative of mental acuteness. This might develop in course of time into a relation between them, not unlike that of the human hero and the clumsy giant as is found in several folktales.

The same character of Loki is found in two stanzas of the Hymiskviða, usually considered as a recent interpolation[2]:

37. Fórot lengi áðr liggia nam
hafr Hlórriða halfdauðr fyrir;
var skær skǫkuls skakkr á beini
en því inn lævísi Loki um ǫlli.

38. En ér heyrt hafið — hverr kann um þat
goðmálugra gørr at skilia? —
hver af hraunbúa hann laun um fekk
er hann bæði galt bǫrn sín fyrir.

The last stanza supposes the same myth as Snorri tells in ch. 44 of the Gylfaginning[3]; only here the children of a peasant, not of a giant, are mentioned. We do not know which is the right reading. In Snorri's rendering of the myth Loki is not mentioned at all; is it a self-evident conclusion from the fact that he accompanies Thor on the journey, when they have the adventure in the peasant's home? Or has later tradition added this motive, because Loki was then considered to be the mischief-maker par excellence? It is curious, that the term *inn lævísi Loki*, also mentioned in a superfluous line of st. 54 of the Lokasenna, is used in the introduction of the tale about Sif's hair: *Loki Laufeyjarson hafði þat gǫrt til lævísi, at klippa hár alt af Sif.* Hence we may surmise that these mythological tales belong to the period when Loki had developed into a foe of gods and men.

---

[1] Ibid. p. 66.

[2] Cf. *R. C. Boer*, Die Edda II, p. 94.

[3] Cf. *Gering-Sijmons*, Edda-Kommentar I, p. 274.

The stanza of the Hymiskviða tells about people who might know more about it; they are called by the technical term *goðmǫlugr.* This is a very interesting detail. We learn from it, that there have been persons, who made a profession of relating and probably also of composing myths. Hence we might ask, if they have left no traces of their activity in literary tradition. Now when we try to give account of the origin of ch. 33 of the Skáldskaparmál, we get the impression that it is a combination of different myths, possibly even partly only a later invention. But obviously Snorri is not its author. For he might be an arranger of the mythological material even in many cases freely handling, remodelling and combining the tradition, but he could not have invented this incoherent mass of motives, only to explain the kenning *haddr Sifjar.* Of course he knew the tale and inserted it here at full length, because he found this the proper place for it.

But then we get a glimpse of the activity of a myth-maker, who arranges traditional material and invents new stories, clearly to divert a public, desiring to hear curious tales about the gods. This goðmǫlugr man may belong to a whole group of myth-mongers, who have had the important merit of preserving and handing down the heathen traditions, but who have not allowed them to pass unaltered through their hands. This class of mythographers includes serious traditionalists as well as mere inventors of mythological fables. They have apparently been one of the foremost causes of the self-contradictory, highly divergant conceptions to be found in Old-Norse traditions. And this is once more an opportunity to warn against the over-estimation of the younger traditions and the tendency to correct or interprete the older sources by the help of the later accretions.

In this way we are able to explain, why we find in Snorri's material such an enormous amount of mythological names, quite unknown in other sources. I already mentioned the names of the dwarfs Brokkr and Sindri. Still more curious is the fact that the thread, with which Loki's mouth is sewn, has its proper name Vartari. We are reminded of the analogous fullness of detail in the myth of Fenrir's binding; in ch. 33 of the Gylfaginning Snorri gives the names of Lœðing, Drómi and Gleipnir for the successive fetters of the monster. Obviously it is not Snorri who invented these names. But it is a common feature of the later development by mythographers, that particular names are given to the smallest details in the mythological tales. In this way their spurious inventions acquire the deceptive appearance of unimpeachable trustworthiness. Hence, if we meet with such suspicious details in the work of Snorri, we must be careful in making use of them for our conclusions. It would be unwarranted to reject them as mere inventions of his; on the contrary he found them doubtless in tradition. But this tradition itself was a queer medley of disparate material. For Snorri did not draw only from the pure sources of the poetic Edda and the Skaldic poems; he made a still more extensive use of oral traditions, that had passed during two or three centuries through the hands of *goðmǫlugir* men.

We will find more instances for their activity later on in the tales about Loki and it seems to me that this fascinating god has had a particular attraction for the mythographers of the period, when men believed no longer in myths, but thought them fit for harmless amusement.

5. Loki as the servant of the thundergod

a. *Exposition of Olrik's view*

Hitherto we have dealt with those myths, that show us Thor and Loki accompanying each other on different expeditions against the giants. In some instances Þjálfi takes the place of Loki, and clearly as a result of secundary combinations both Þjálfi and Loki appear as the companions of the thundergod. As Loki only occasionally figures in this rôle and on the contrary Þjálfi is nothing else but the servant of Thor, we may infer that the latter originally belongs to the sphere of Thor's activities, while on the other hand Loki has for some reason or another been associated with the thundergod in a function like that of Þjálfi. Still the question may be raised, if it is not possible that one of the constitutive elements of the highly complicated figure of Loki is his having been exactly the companion and servant of the thundergod.

It is Axel Olrik who put the question most energetically and proposed a brilliant solution. In a paper on this subject[1] he collected a great deal of folkloristic material drawn from Scandinavian, Lappish and Esthonian sources, all pertaining to the mythic conception of the thundergod's servant. The representations on Lappish magic drums as well as a Swedish folktale led him to the conclusion, that a very original form of this conception was to be found here. The companion of Thor has neither a prominent position nor a clear-cut character; he is completely dwarfed by the god himself. With this companion, whom Olrik considers to be especially Swedish, he connects the name of Þjálfi, because it is more common in East-Scandinavian than in either Norwegian or Icelandic tradition.

---

[1] »Tordenguden og hans dreng» in Danske Studier 1905 p. 129-146.

On the other hand there are some Esthonian and Finnish folk-tales about the thundergod and his servant, where the latter shows striking similarities to the figure of Loki; here we find, according to Olrik, reminiscences both of the Hymiskviða and the Þrymskviða. Hence Loki as the companion of Thor was known to the Teutonic peoples who have influenced the tradition of the Esthonians; he formulates it in this way, that these myths are an early borrowing from the most eastern »gothic» tribes.

In Danish scholarly literature »gothic» is used as a general name for all Teutonic peoples[1]; hence we do not know exactly what Olrik meant by this vague term. If the borrowing has taken place as early as the beginning of our era, the only tribes that can be taken into consideration are those belonging to the East-Teutonic stock (the Aestii in the days of Tacitus[2], probably closely related to the Gothic tribes); they came, according to their own traditions from Southern-Sweden, but developed afterwards into a quite independant group of Teutonic peoples. In later times the Teutonic population of Esthonia was undoubtedly Swedish. Hence it seems to me that we have to take those »most eastern gothic tribes» either as identical with or as closely related to the Swedes.

The distinction between a specially Swedish Þjálfi and an »eastern-gothic» Loki gives the impression of being purely theoretical and even arbitrary. If we look at the Scandinavian traditions themselves, we come to the conclusion, that Loki has been known particularly among the West-Scandinavian peoples where he is an important figure in mythological traditions. The most outstanding conclusion is that Loki is especially Western, whereas Þjálfi may have been originally more particularly Eastern. To this logical observation, made by *H. Celander*[1], Olrik violently objects[2] by stressing emphatically that he called Þjálfi Swedish and that the myths of Thor-Loki have their most original form in the countries beyond the Baltic.

---

[1] Cf. *G. Schütte*, Vor Folkegruppe Gottjod I, p. 45.

[2] *T. E. Karsten*, Germanisch-finnische Lehnwortstudien p. 206 sqq.

This, however, is only escaping from the necessary consequence of his own statements. It is indeed highly improbable that there have been at the same time and with the same people two different mythical forms of the servant of the thundergod. If Þjálfi is Swedish, then Loki, who is prominant in West-Scandinavian tradition must be Norwegian-Icelandic. In the course of later development they penetrated into each others domain; hence Þjálfi has been adopted in Eddic mythology and on the contrary Loki was introduced into Swedish popular belief. But then the knowledge about Loki among the most Eastern Gothic peoples becomes very enigmatical and we are obliged to try to make a clear distinction between the two different forms of one single mythical conception.

Olrik's view on the relation between the Esthonian myth and Scandinavian mythology of the thundergod's servant has not been unchallenged. In the above mentioned study *Celander* has contested the correctness of Olrik's argumentation. I myself have expressed my doubts about it.[3] A new treatment of this problem is inevitable, particularly since we now have occasion to obtain more exhaustive information about the Esthonian tradition, than was possible in the days when Olrik wrote his study.

---

[1] Lokes mytiska ursprung p. 90.

[2] Danske Studier 1912 p. 91.

[3] Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsche Taal- en Letterkunde XLVII, p. 294.

b. *The Esthonian tale about the instrument of the thundergod*

In my wish to avail myself of the opportunity to consult the greatest amount of material attainable at this moment, I asked Dr. *Loorits* in Tartu to send me all the variants, that had been collected since the publication of Kreutzwald's texts. He had the kindness to copy for me all the extant variants and I thought it advisable to insert them in the present paper. Meanwhile, however, I was informed, that he himself had prepared a publication of this material, accompanied by a critical treatment of the subject[1]; therefore I shall refrain from doing this over again, because I am able to refer the reader to the investigation of Dr. Loorits. Still it will be necessary to mention some particulars, which may enable the reader, who has not the Esthonian material at hand, to follow the main lines of my reasoning.

The following variants are known at present:

1 A. Kreutzwald's text in »Inland», issue of 10. II. 1856 Nr. 6 col. 89—90, originally collected by Johann Lagos from a peasant in Pernau. This Lagos, however, had the bad reputation of falsifying traditions by fanciful literary treatment.

1 B. An other text, published by Kreutzwald in »Eesti rahwa Ennemuistsed jutud» (Helsinki 1866) p. 123——126. This is a new and arbitrary adaptation of the former text.

2. A third text of Kreutzwald, published in the same book; this is again an artificial contamination, where it is difficult to point out the real popular tradition.
3. A short popular variant, collected in Kadrina 1898 (E 35370); certainly under the influence of Kreutzwald.
4. An other text from Kadrina 1899 (E 39389), showing the same character as 3.

---

[1] It appeared meanwhile in the Sitzungsberichte der Gelehrten Estnischen Gesellschaft 1930 under the title *Das märchen vom gestohlenen Donnerinstrument bei den Esten* (Tartu 1932).

5. A variant from Ambla 1895 (E 20718—22); the author of this text says himself that he added several words to ameliorate the story.
6. Very short text from Koeru 1891 (H II, 39, 264) by a correspondent who is one of the greatest visionaries among the collaborators of Hurt.
7. Very long and complicated story from Saaremaa (= Ösel), published by M. J. Eisen in his »Eesti imede ilmast» (Tartu 1896); it shows the same shortcomings as the former texts: unreliability by personal additions and alterations.
8. A text written down by a reliable correspondent in Kõpu 1897 (H II, 59, 388—91), but from the mouth of a labourer, who came from Saaremaa.
9. A variant from Tartu 1891 (H II, 44, 41—43), an apparently quite popular tradition.
10. A short popular text from Karksi 1890 (H II, 23, 105—106).
11. Two texts, written down in Helme, A in 1910 (E 47396) by the father of the man, who furnished B in 1893 (E 3238—9); the tradition seems to be reliable.
12. A short variant from the same district 1893 (E 3046—7).
13. A text of Wiedemann (I, 125—6), probably from Võrumaa earlier than 1873.
14. Legendary variant from Vastseliina 1889 (H II, 3, 318—320).
15. Very elaborate legend from the same district 1898 (H II, 61, 287—296).
16. Legend called Ilja päiv from the same district 1898 (H II, 61, 663–676).

We see at once that the material is very unequal. We possess several genuine traditional texts, but the majority is, if not utterly worthless, at any rate of very questionable value, because the correspondents have treated the tale quite freely in order to give a more interesting appearance to it, or because they are under the strong influence of Kreutzwald's inventions. It is to be observed that the reliable texts are all found in the South-Eastern parts of Esthland, with the only exception of 8, considered by

Loorits as a genuine tradition and belonging to the island Saaremaa. The doubtful variants have been collected in two different areas, one in the North-East (3—6) and an other in the South-West, including Saaremaa (1, 2 and 7). This clear geographical distribution makes it easy to study this popular tale; of course we must begin with the authentical South-Eastern group.

But here we must again make a distinction, for we can leave aside the variants 14—16, because they are properly speaking a legendary tale about Saint Ilja, the well-known successor of the thundergod in Slavic Europe. Then 9—13 (especially 9—11) are apparently excellent examples of the real popular form. The tale runs ordinarily as follows: The devil steals the thunder instrument (called *pikse riista*, *müristemise pill*, *müristamisasjad*; hence by no means a bagpipe as is often said) from the thundergod, in the vast majority of cases without any reasons or details. In 12 it is a young man, who steals it for him, but as he is called a fisherman, this is obviously a reminiscence of an other episode, that in its turn has been dropped. The thunderer who was asleep, is unable to find his instrument, when he wakes up; so he tries to get it back, often by taking service with a fisherman, while he assumes the appearance of a boy (9), or he goes fishing himself (10) and sometimes he is said simply to start on an expedition to find it (12—13). While he is fishing the devil takes the fishes from his net, but the thundergod sees this and succeeds in capturing the thief; the devil (or his son) says that he wants the fishes for a wedding-party and he is finally released after having invited the fisher and his servant to the feast (9—10). Most variants are very fragmentary in this part of the story, but they all agree in the description of the feast. Sometimes the thundergod arrives there by pure accident (12—13), or he goes with a companion without any apparent reason (11). At the feast the devil is induced to fetch the instrument, which he keeps behind seven locks, but nobody is able to play on it with the exception of the fisherman's servant. As soon as he puts it to his mouth, a thunderstorm arises, the devils are destroyed and the rain is again allowed to pour down on the earth.

The legendary variants have preserved the different motives very well; they contain the theft of the instrument, the service with the fisherman, the capture of the devil in the net and the wedding-party. If we compare the other variants we find on the whole the same episodes, more or less changed and sometimes absent. On the other hand we may point out in some very few cases slight details which do not occur in the usual form.

It is significant that these deviations are found in the introduction, the most vulnerable part of a popular tale. In the variants 2, 3, 8 and 12 the devil succeeds in stealing the instrument by the help of a servant, whom he raises to heaven by stretching out his neck. The thundergod lies asleep with his arm on the instrument; by the trick of the louse he is induced to make an movement and he therewith allows the thief to snatch it away. This is told in 2, 3, 5 and 8 and belongs apparently to different regions of the country, but in texts that are either composed by Kreutzwald or under the suspicion of having been submitted to his influence.

There is still an other point of interest. The thunderer may act on his own behalf, or he is in a subordinate position with regard to an other and more powerful supernatural being. In the latter case he is obliged to confess the loss of his instrument; sometimes he actually does so, but sometimes he dares not face the wrath of his master. This is of course the case in the legendary tales, where Ilja is the real hero; then he tells his misfortune to *Taiva Esä* (14) or it is said that he does not venture to go to *Jummal* (15). Loorits distinguishes them as two different redactions and this is methodically unimpeachable, but it is by no means sure, that they can be treated as two originally independant forms of the tale. On the contrary, the difference is too slight to be of much importance for such a far-reaching conclusion; they may be simply more recent ramifications of one original tale. It is, however, not clear at first sight, what the exact relation between them has been, for there are two equally plausible solutions: the Ilja-legend is the original form, where of course the saint must be subordinated to God and then as a result of a later development the tale has been simplified by dropping the celestial being, that plays no rôle whatever in the tale. But we may also suppose that there has been a heathen tale about the thundergod, in which he was not said to have been dependant upon a higher deity; then he was afterwards considered as a divinity subject to the heavengod, if he had not been dethroned by the influence of the Christian Ilja-legend.

Dr. Loorits distinguishes three redactions. Besides A and B, respectively one where the devil acts on his own account (2, 3, 5, 8, 12) and the Ilja-legend with some connected variants (1, 6, 7, 9, 14—16), he mentions as a third redaction C the text 11, where we do not find a fisherman but a beggar. The thundergod, in the shape of a boy, meets him by pure accident and proposes that they should pay a visit to the christening feast of the devil's mother. This is indeed a very unusual form of the tale. The difficulty is enhanced by the fact, that this text belongs to the same district as 12, a poor text, from which nearly all the details have disappeared, but where the fishing scene and the wedding-party are clearly mentioned. I do not think it worth while to ponder on this redaction; in my opinion the variants 11 A and 11 B are relics of a fragmentary and confused tradition; there are so many instances of the vivid imagination of Esthonian story-tellers — and the correspondent of 11 B was a schoolmaster![1] — so we may safely assume, that the man who told this story, himself invented the beggar, because he had forgotten that it ought to be a fisherman. The christening party of the devil's mother is likewise quite spurious; the correspondent of 11 B added to it: »or some other feast».

The motive of the louse is found in 2, 3, 5 and 8. According to Loorits 3 and 5 are influenced by Kreutzwald, but 8 must be treated as a genuine tradition. If this is true, this text should be particularly interesting, because it might give the solution for one of Kreutzwald's sources. In this variant we are told that a musician *Tiit* (*pilli Tiit*) steals the instrument at the devil's request. Loorits supposes that this personage may have been the prototype of the *paristaja poeg* in Kreutzwald's text 2. But this is by no means sure. The idea of a helper of the devil is found in more variants, as we have seen, f.i. in 12. Nowhere is he called a musician with the only exception of 8, where this gives the impression of a rather awkward innovation.

But the popular character of the variant 8 seems to me on the whole rather doubtful. I wish to point out the following indications of literary influence:

1. When the devil hears that the thundergod may possibly wake up, he says stammering: *Kaak*, *kaak*, *kaak*, *kas paergus?* (Will this happen presently?). And again, when Tiit asks for a louse, the devil answers: *Mim*, *mim mitu tarvis on?* (How many do you want?). The louse is described as so very large that Tiit lifts it up with both his hands!
2. If the country *Baruk*, as Dr. Loorits suggests, has got its name from the biblical *Baruch*, this is an instance of untraditional elements.

---

[1] His father, who first had told him the story, afterwards communicated it himself also to a folklorist; but of course he may have handed on the form, his son had given to it.

3. The part of the tale, where the thunderer comes to the devil's feast is quite out of joint. The devil fetches a man to play on his wonderful instrument. We find the same motive in 4, a variant that has only preserved the bare outlines of the story. It is obvious that our variant 8 represents a partially defective tradition.
4. The *pill* is closed behind seven locks. This is of course a detail from biblical tradition and may be due to literary influence. It is found in the texts 1, 2, 5, 8 and 12. The variants 1 and 2 are composed by Kreutzwald, 5 is influenced by them, 12 is very corrupt. If the text 8 does agree in more cases with the Kreutzwald-redactions, it seems to me fairly certain, that it has also undergone this influence.
5. The devil stretches out his neck to lift the thief up into heaven. This is found in the variants 2, 3, 8 and 12. As to the distribution of the texts, I may refer to the preceding case. Since it is a very logical motive, that the devil must make some effort to reach as high as heaven, it may have been introduced by a redactor, who wished to furnish a fuller description of the events.
6. The trick of the louse is found in the variants 2, 3, 5 and 8. Here the case is still more clear, because var. 12 does not even appear. Besides 8 we have only texts of Kreutzwald or influenced by him. Certainly this motive does not properly belong to this story, for it forms part of quite a different folktale (Aarne-Thompson Nr. 560) and it has been introduced here to adorn the rather meagre story. Who has done it, Kreutzwald or popular tradition, represented exclusively by 8? The answer can not be difficult, since this is quite in accordance with Kreutzwald's method of literary treatment.
7. The thundergod shows himself in his real form as soon as he has taken hold of his instrument. This is only found in 2 and 8. In the other variants he keeps his disguise; sometimes, however, one of the devil ssuspects that he is more than his appearance shows, f.i. in 13 he says: this is *pikse* himself, for I have recognised him by his red eyes (cf. also 7, 9, 11 and 16). The circumstance, that in this respect 8 corresponds with 2 and with no other variant, almost proves that 8 depends on Kreutzwald's text.

These are my reasons, why I arrive at a conclusion different from that of Loorits. The redaction of Saaremaa is also an artificial text, going back to the famous collections of Kreutzwald. It was not necessary for the informant to have read a literary form, because there had been for several years such a continuous influence upon popular tradition, that one could repeat a text of Kreutzwald without being conscious of it. Then there is no reason to believe in the existence of two independant traditions in Saaremaa (7 and 8) which Dr. Loorits considers of great importance. Moreover, the variant 8 was taken down from the mouth of a labourer in Kõpu, and although this man was born in Saaremaa, this does not imply that his text belongs to the tradition of this island; he may have picked it up elsewhere as well.

Loorits arrives at the conclusion that the A-redaction may have a Scandinavian origin, belonging properly to the viking-traditions. The only valid argument seems to be the motive of the biting louse, that reminds one of the myth about the Brísingamen. The conditions in both tales are quite different; there can be no organic connection whatever. If, as I have tried to prove, the variant 8 is dependant upon a text of Kreutzwald, then we may explain the coincidence between his tale and the Scandinavian myth simply by the assumption, that he himself has imitated this interesting detail which he found in a popular tale. When the A-redaction has, as we have shown, such a very doubtful character, it is rather unsafe to make use of it for a hypothetical construction, according to which viking-traditions should have influenced this tale.

The B-redaction has, on the contrary, a Russian origin. The legendary variants about Ilja can only be derived from a Russian source, although such a tale has not yet been found in Russia. Here we find all the most interesting motives of the tale: the fishing scene and the wedding feast.

If there has ever been an indigenous Esthonian »myth» about the theft of the thunder-instrument, it is likely that it has had a very simple structure, and that it has developed into the actual form by a corresponding legend about Ilja. Penetrating farther into Esthland, the Christian names were dropped and so the tale obtained the appearance of a real heathen myth. But, although Ilja very easily could be given up, the devil could not be ousted and he acts in all the known variants as the malevolent opponent of the thundergod.

In which way Kreutzwald collected his material seems to be as yet an open question. Loorits tries to give a solution, but in a very hesitating way. I do not think it probable that he got any information from Saaremaa, as this supposition is only founded on the alleged originality of the variant 8. The best and most complete redactions are found in the South-Eastern parts of the country, in Võrumaa and Setumaa; why should he not have heard an example of this tradition? It is even very likely that he knew the tale in the form of a legend, and that he has dropped the name Ilja and given to it a more heathen form. Is it indeed not fairly certain, that the Lijon-mystification in the text of Lagos ultimately goes back to the figure of Ilja[1]? In Kreutzwald's text 1 we read at the end, that the thundergod says to the fisherman Lijon, that as a token of gratitude he will never refuse any wish expressed by him. And ever since Lijon has remained a mediator between the gods and mankind. The same is related in the second text of Kreutzwald (I B), but in the variant 2 the fisherman has no particular name and it is the thundergod himself (*paristaja poeg*) who becomes the servant of the heavengod (*Kõutaat*). This agrees very well with the legendary forms, where Ilja is also the servant of God; in variant 15 he says to the old fisherman: »Dear master, remember this: if I drive through the clouds in my golden carriage and you hear the cracking of my whip and the sound of my *pill*, then all your nets will be filled with fishes. This will be your reward.» Both motives, the gratitude of the thundergod and his obsequiousness to the Lord, are found also in the adaptations of Kreutzwald. It is a queer irony of fate, that Olrik and Celander have had such an acute controversy on account of a personage, who proves to be the result of a quite arbitrary adaptation of Kreutzwald.

---

[1] Cf. the interesting discussion in Loorits' paper on p. 102 ff.

Loorits arrives at the conclusion that Kreutzwald is still of some importance in the characteristic features of the tale for the student of mythology. To judge from the example, presented by the tale of the thunder-instrument, I am not so sure about this reliability for the investigation of popular traditions; if we have no real genuine variants to correct his artificial adornments, we had better refrain from this troubled source. At any rate the famous Esthonian »myth» of the theft of the thunder-instrument is in its present form originally a Christian legend and there is no connection whatever with any viking-tradition. The form, Kreutzwald has given to it, is nothing better than a mystification, to use the severe but justified term of Dr. Loorits. And such a worthless falsification has been treated by several scholars as a reliable text, learned digressions have been written about it and the attempt has been made to solve difficult questions of Scandinavian mythology by means of such a forgery. Here again we percieve how dangerous it is to make use of popular material in matters of religion, if we have only the faintest ideas about the character and the provenience of these traditions.

c. *The Finnish tale about the instrument of the thundergod*

Besides the Esthonian tale there exists also a Finnish story about the way in which the thundergod got his instrument back. As the Finnish variants show a rather great difference from the tale, as it is current in Esthonia, we must give a short survey of their contents. Prof. *Kaarle Krohn* has been so kind as to send me the most interesting variants, that could help me in a study of this tradition; of the 37 texts tabulated in Aarne's list[1] under Nr. 1148 there are 10 variants that belong to this type, viz. the numbers 2 (from North Tavastland), 5 and 6 (from North Savolax), 12 (from East-Karelia), 14, 15 and 17 (from North-Karelia), 26, 27 and 29 (from Middle Österbotten). The variants 15, 17, 26 and 29 are more or less fragmentary, whereas 6 is told in a rather equivocal literary style. The contents, however, agree very well and it is not difficult to establish the original form of the tale.

During his sleep the thundergod (*Ukkonen*) or God (*Jumala*) is robbed by the devil. His instruments are called *pelivärkit* (26) or mill-stones (6: *ne kivet joilla ukko jürisöö*). In 14 the devil brings the instrument of thunder *(jylistimet)* to a rock. In disguise the god goes to the devil and offers to become his servant. Then they embark to fish together; the servant proves to be exceptionally strong. The devil is induced to boast of his having robbed the thundergod of his instrument and to fetch them (in some variants they are locked up in a room with many bolts). The devil, however, can not play on them; hence the strong servant may try his forces. He begins to play softly, but gradually with increasing violence and at last the devil's hall bursts asunder, his children are smashed to pieces and he himself dies, is thrown into the air or swoons.

In his discussion of the Lappish, Finnish and Esthonian tales *Kaarle Krohn*[2] points out, as Axel Olrik had done before, several seemingly strong resemblances with the Eddic poems Þrymskviða and Hymiskviða. It may, however, be advisable to treat the popular traditions of Finland and Esthonia separately, because they show a few remarkable differences. The frame of the tale is obviously exactly the same: the instrument is stolen, the thundergod disguises himself as a servant, and likewise the dénouement is the same. Still there are some interesting details in which they deviate. In the Finnish tale, which on the whole is much simpler than the Esthonian, the thunderer becomes the servant of the devil himself; hence the fishing-scene is told in an altogether different way. Now, according to Krohn, the more complicated form of the Esthonian tale is a later development of a shorter story, identical with the Finnish; the robbing of the fishes out of the net may be a repetition of the theft of the thundergod's instrument and the being entangled in the net is a motive borrowed from other folk-tales. This is, indeed, quite possible; at any rate there is too great a similitude between the Finnish and the Esthonian tales to consider them as parallel, originally unrelated traditions. Now we have arrived at the conclusion that the B-group of the Esthonian variants is most probably of Russian provenience. Dr. Loorits supposes the A-group to belong to viking-traditions, but the only motive, pointing in this direction, is the episode of the biting louse — and of this motive there is no trace whatever in the Finnish tale. Hence we are induced to explain the curious relation between the Finnish and Esthonian tales by one of the two following suppositions: either the Esthonian tale is the original form and during its wandering to the Finnish people it took a different form by dropping several episodes and readjusting the remaining ones, or else the Finnish tale represents the original and in Esthonia it was combined with a Russian legend about Ilja.

---

[1] Finnische Märchenvarianten, FFCommunications Nr. 5.

[2] Übersicht über einige Resultate der Märchenforschung, FFCommunications Nr. 96, p. 124 sqq.

I, myself, am more inclined to the former supposition, but I avow readily that I am unable to give any decisive proofs for my opinion.[1] Hence I wish for the moment to accept Krohn's view as to the originality of the Finnish tale and to consider on this basis the possible relations between this story and the Eddic poems. The objections that may be raised against this assumption are the same that oppose themselves against Olrik's hypothesis about the relation between these Old-Norse poems and the Esthonian tale. I shall discuss them in detail in the following paragraph. Here this may be stated: the fishing-scene has indeed some similarities with the famous episode of the Hymiskviða, but only in this respect that in both stories a god proves his superior strength while rowing with a giant in a fishing-boat. This would be conclusive if only the Eddic poem related a kind of *hamarsheimt*, but the Hymiskviða tells about the fishing of the world-serpent. Then we are not justified to construct a different Scandinavian myth in which Thor entered into the possession of his instrument by means of the trick, that he took service with the giant, who robbed him of his hammer. And if we did, we should only arrive at a supposed tale, in which there is no imaginable rôle for a personage like Loki. In the Hymiskviða as well as in the Finnish tale the god is not accompanied by a servant, but he is himself a servant.

The identity of the Eddic poem and the Finnish tale consists exclusively in the rowing contest between the god and the giant. This may have been originally a myth, but then it looks deceptivily like a common folk-tale. It is quite in accordance with the well-known group of stories, in which a strong boy enters the service of a giant and by his cunning proves stronger than his master.[2] The only difference is, that the thundergod indeed has more strength than the giant and that he makes him tremble before his unexpected force. Moreover among a people of fishermen such a tale could easily be imagined. If the fishing of the world-serpent should be a Scandinavian adaptation of a Christian legend about Leviathan, then we are likewise impelled to explain the rowing-contest in the Hymiskviða as a new motive introduced into the Old-Norse rendering of the legend. Is there any plausible reason to suppose that it had been previously part of a story about a *hamarsheimt* and is it not much simpler to regard it as a motive current in folk-tales? Since it is moreover a motive that belongs to the kind, Wesselski very aptly calls »Gemeinschaftsmotive», there seems to me no necessity whatever for the far-fetched supposition of a lost myth about a Scandinavian *hamarsheimt*. For the study of Old-Norse mythology about the thundergod and his servant the Finnish tale seems to me of no value, indeed of less value than the Esthonian tradition, to the discussion of which we will now return.

---

[1] The same may be said, of course, with regard to the opposite assumption; here decisive arguments are wanting likewise.

[2] Aarne's number 1087 is a rowing-contest, but the boy wins by damaging the giant's boat. This motive is only found in Finland.

d. *Criticism of Olrik's hypothesis*

It will now be necessary to take up the problem in its entire compass. The questions, that require to be answered, are the following: Have we any indications for the supposition that Loki and Þjálfi belong to different areas of Scandinavian mythology? Is Þjálfi originally a Swedish form of the thundergod's companion? Is Loki on the contrary confined to another area and may we consider the *pikkeripois* of the Esthonian myth as an early and more original form of Loki?

I agree with Axel Olrik in this respect, that a little companion of the thundergod — a not uncommon notion in primitive belief — has been known in Old-Norse mythical conceptions of this phenomenon. Perhaps he is the religious expression for the faint rumbling before the actual peal of thunder, although this explanation is by no means sure. The small figure at the side of the thundergod, as it is depicted on the magic drums of the Laps, is sufficiant evidence for this conception in Lappish and we may infer that it has also been known in Swedish belief. But the Swedish folk-tale about »lyfte-stenen» in the Linneryd-district can not be taken in its full extent as a genuine heathen tradition.

Thor meets a giant on one of his journeys, who wishes to fight him. But the god mocks him and says that he can not even lift the small pebble that lies on the top of a huge stone standing near by. Indeed the giant is not able to do it. Then Thor tells his small servant to try to do it and he does it without any difficulty. The giant gets into a fury, but is smashed to pieces by the powerful hammer of the thundergod.

It is evident that this tale is invented to account for the curious stone in Linnerydsby. This stone was a kind of oracle, even in the 18th century when Rudbeck told about it in his »Smålands Antiqviteter». The churchgoers were wont to try their strength by lifting the small stone and curiously enough, often an apparently feeble man succeeded in this effort, while a stout and sturdy person could not even move it. In itself this is a popular belief[1], that has nothing whatever to do with the person of Thor. But he might be brought into some connection with it and then it lay near at hand to make the lifting of the stone the object of a contest between him and a troll. It is, however, not a superiority of muscular strength that gives the decision in this case; the small stone has no excessive weight but it has mythical properties by which some people are allowed to lift it, others not. Thor consecrates the stone with his hammer and that is the reason why the giant is unable to lift it. In a Christian legend Thor might be replaced by a saint and then the token of the cross would have had the same effect as Thor's hammer.[1] Hence it is not the force that decides, but exclusively the fact if the magical potency is propitious or not. The small servant of Thor illustrates this in a very interesting way.

---

[1] Cf. *H. F. Feilberg*, Bidrag til en Ordbog over Jyske Almuesmål II, p. 551—2; *Von Unwerth*, Untersuchungen über Tolenkult und Ódinnverkehrung bei Nordgermanen und Lappen, p. 12 ff.; *Eric Elgqvist*, Något om Lyftestenar, Nordiskt Folkminne, Studier tillägnade C. W. von Sydow p. 71—84.

It may be asked whether this popular tradition does not show any traces of its being influenced by the Eddic literature. Olrik denies it flatly. The author, however, who preserved this curious instance of folk-lore for us, knows the Edda very well and he himself makes an allusion to the Eddic Þjálfi.[2] Hence we do not know in what degree he has fashioned the popular tradition into its present form. We are not quite sure, if the informant *Nils Knutsson* has not himself introduced Thor into the story, perhaps because his interlocutor had asked him, if he knew anything about this god.[3] But since we have no indication whatever in one direction or another, let us accept this tale as genuine.

What then does it tell us about the heathen conceptions of Thor and his servant? Olrik points out the great difference between the character of Eddic mythology and popular traditions and he arrives at the conclusion that in this respect the myth from Småland represents an earlier degree of civilisation (»et ældre kulturtrin») than almost the entire

---

[1] Or the tale may have been originally a Christian legend and afterwards have been remodelled by antiquarians into a »heathen myth». There is a similar Mohammedan tale about Moses and a certain Schoeib; the latter is unable to lift a stick from the ground, but Moses does it without any effort (cf. A. Wünsche, Die Sagen vom Levensbaum und Lebenswasser p, 45).

[2] »Och hade en dräng, och lär det vara den Edda kallar Tjolfe».

[3] Cf. my observation in FFComm. Nr. 94 p. 5.

Eddic poetry with its aesthetic proclivity to characterisation. That is the reason why we may infer that the simpler conception of the popular tale represents a more primitive form of the religious representations than the literary products in the Edda.

This is again a curious example of the overestimation of popular traditions. Of course a tale, current among peasant-people and obviously having lived many centuries in the memory of a Christian community, does not show the same character as the highly artistic products of Icelandic literature. But it does not follow that they should be older nor that they are more genuine. On the contrary, the adaptation of a literary product to the mind of uncultivated people always brings about a transformation of the original tale and a reduction to simpler forms. If the tale of the »lifting-stone» presents to us the servant of the thundergod as a mere companion, without attributing to him any particular rôle, this need not be explained as a proof of its high antiquity. In the economy of the tale there was only a very restricted place for the servant; consequently his character was accommodated to the more primitive setting of a local tradition. The conception of the servant in the Swedish folk-tale does not imply that originally the mythical value of Þjálfi has been quite the same; it only shows us what has been the result of the simplifying development in the course of popular tradition.[1]

The »myth» of the lifting-stone is not of such exceptional importance as Olrik supposed it to be. We learn from it, what we already knew: Thor has a little companion on his journeys. But he may have been the same intelligent person as in the myth of Hrungnir. The folk-tale, however, only required him as a foil to both Thor and the giant; hence only his small stature is mentioned.

---

[1] The same may be said with regard to Olrik's treatment of the Lappish tale of the bound Termes (Danske Studier 1906, p. 65 ff.); it may be as well a simplification of a more elaborate myth, or this myth on an older cultural level, as Olrik takes it.

In Sweden the conception of the thundergod's servant seems to have been known. Was it Þjálfi? Olrik tries to prove it, although in a very unsatisfactory way. Obviously it is not enough to point out that the Lappish belief and the Swedish folk-tale both suppose it to have been known among the Swedes; for why should it have been more at home here than everywhere else in Scandinavian territory? As the sole support for his view he mentions the fact, that Þjálfi is a rather common name in Sweden, whereas it seems to have been unknown in Norway. Lundgren whose authority Olrik invokes, speaks about »the not so very rarely occurring» name and asks hesitatingly, if this name has been given on account of the mythological Þjálfi.[1] We do not know why such a name has had particular favour in one part of Scandinavia, why not in another; but it may be quite independant from the original mythical meaning of the word.[2] The founder of Gotlands population about whom the Gutasaga tells a curious tale, is also called Þjelvar; the connection with the thundergod's servant is by no means clear. Furthermore the name is not quite unknown in Norway. E. H. Lind quotes[3] a local name *Þialfahellir* as possible proof for its being used as a personal name. The surname Þorkell Þialfi, if this is the correct form and not *bialfi*[4], may point in the same direction. One might suggest that the reason why the name was only very seldom used in Norway was because it denoted a superhuman being and that it on this account could not be appropriately used as a personal name.[1] On the other hand its more frequent occurrence in Sweden might indicate that here the mythological personality was scarcely known. But from what has been said it will be clear that the facts are scanty and admit of different explanations.

---

[1] Spår af hednisk tro och kult i fornsvenska personnamn p. 40.

[2] As some of the books quoted by Lundgren are not accessible to me. I am unable to verify, if the examples belong to a particular district of Sweden or not.

[3] Norsk-isländska Dopnamn och fingerade namn från Medeltiden col. 1123.

[4] *E. H. Lind*, Norsk-isländska Personbinamn från Medeltiden col. 407.

I arrive at the conclusion that the reasons, adduced by Olrik for a special connection of Þjálfi with Swedish belief, are unsatisfactory; on the other hand it is evident from the literary traditions that he has been in Norway and in Iceland more the companion of Thor than Loki, who only occasionally plays this rôle.

What is the value of the Esthonian myth? Olrik finds a strong resemblance between it and the Icelandic traditions about Loki, but he was not the first to observe this. As early as 1858 Jacob Grimm after reading the first printed text in »Das Inland» noticed the identity with the Þrymskviða and the Hymiskviða, as is proved by a communication of Schiefner in the same periodical.[2] Olrik makes use of two versions published by Kreutzwald in his collection of Esthonian folk-tales and translated by H. Jannsen. The first text (Nr. 4 of the second part of this translation) is the same as Nr. 2 in the list of the variants, mentioned above, and the second text (Nr. 10 of the first part of the same translation) is Nr. I B of the same list.

Olrik points out the following similarities.[3] The thunder-instrument is stolen and recovered, as is the hammer in the Þrymskviða. The thundergod acts as a servant of a fisherman and catches the devil in his net, cf. the Hymiskviða where Thor draws the Midgardserpent from the bottom of the ocean. Then the son of the thundergod obtains his release from captivity by promising the devil to steal the instrument; Olrik compares the myth of Iðunn. The theft succeeds by means of the trick of a flee, as we found it in the myth of the Brísingamen. Finally the *pikkeri pois* plays the same rôle as the Loki of the Þrymskviða.

---

[1] Names of gods are common as part of a composition, but not without a second element.

[2] Ibidem 1858 Nr. 39 col. 629.

[3] Danske Studier 1905 p. 142.

In my opinion this comparison shows three serious shortcomings:

1. If we find the various motives of one tale elsewhere in four different traditions, the value of these similitudes is seriously weakened. They may have been after all several loose motives, common to the belief or popular traditions of both peoples but combined into one single tale only in Esthonian folk-lore. This is perfectly clear with regard to the motive of the biting louse. If we do not accept this explanation, there are only two possibilities: *a* the Esthonian folk-tale has borrowed these motives from Scandinavian tradition as parts of the Loki-cycle and united them into one single myth. This is of course very improbable, as we do not see how the Esthonians could have become acquainted with them. *b*. The Esthonian folk-tale presupposes that among this people traditions about a servant of the thundergod have been current, going back to prehistoric borrowings from a Scandinavian people. This seems to be the view of Olrik, but it is supported by no proof whatever.

2. The similarities are on the whole very superficial. Catching the devil in a net, where he steals the fishes is not the same as drawing up the Midgardsserpent by means of a fishingline. The hammer is not the same as the *pill*. The marriage feast of the devil has quite a different meaning from that in the Þrymskviða. The trick of the biting louse is a simple motive of folk-tales. Only by reducing these motives to their most abstract form can we get a likeness, that is at first sight not altogether improbable.

3. The texts used by Olrik are unreliable, as they have been composed by Kreutzwald in a most arbitrary way. It is certainly excusable in the case of Olrik, who did not know more variants of this tale, but it shows at the same time — as already said above — how exceedingly dangerous it is, to draw farreaching conclusions from slight material, that moreover is not absolutely reliable.

Now we have a larger store of variants, which are moreover partly really popular; so we may ask again if the Esthonian myth proves anything for Loki as the companion of the thundergod. A servant of this god is to begin with quite unknown in Esthonian folk-lore. Here we find two different figures, on the one hand Kõu or Kõue, on the other hand Pikne or Piksepoiss. The first one is the real thundergod, often hardly distinguishable from the heavengod Vanaisa or Vanataat. The relation between him and Pikne is quite obscure; now-a-days Kõu is represented as an old man, whereas Pikne can be a boy as well as a grown-up man. In var. 2 (Olrik's A-text) the thundergod is named Kõu-taat, Vana taat, Müristaja taat and Pikker, a queer medley of names, showing the arbitrary character of Kreutzwald's compilation. But in a prayer to Kõu, written down in the village of Võnnu, the god is addressed as Tuli-Pikker and as Kange-Kõu.[1] If Eisen says that originally Kõu has been the thunderer and Pikker[2] the god of lightning, I do not know on what fact he bases this opinion, but when he continues to say that Pikker also sounds the trumpet[3], I do not see why he should have been different from Kõu.

For the sun of the thundergod we have only evidence from the Southern Esthonians, who say that *piksepoiss* sounds the *põugahuse sarv*.[1] Eisen, who does not know any explanation for this boy, supposes that he is the same as Pikne himself, because he often changes himself into a young man.[2] This seems quite acceptable. In var. 9 the thunderer is called *Pikne*, but when he acts as the foster-son of a poor man, his name is *Pikse poisike*. Hence the thundergod in his disguise as servant of a fisherman may be thought of as a small boy.

---

[1] Cf. *J. M. Eisen*, Estnische Mythologie p. 161.

[2] This is according to Loorits p. 97 an untraditional form for *Pikne*.

[3] Ibidem, p. 162.

The son of the thundergod does not belong to the Esthonian myth.[3] In the original form of the tale the thundergod is robbed of his instrument, then he goes to seek it and takes service with a fisherman. Here he succeeds in catching the devil who steals fishes for the wedding-feast and Satan is only released after having invited him to the feast. In this part of the tale there is no place for the son of the thunderer: he only appears in the introductory part of some texts. But here more recent additions are only to be expected and in fact in most variants, particularly in those that are popular, the devil himself steals the thunderinstrument.

From these Esthonian tales we can not expect to get any light for the elucidation of the Old-Norse myths about Loki. They show in their original form only very slight similarities to the Eddic poems about Thor's journeys to Hymir and Þrymr, in fact they go back to quite a different conception of the thundergod. The hammer in Scandinavia is irreconcilible with the *pill* of Pikne or the *jyristimet* of Ukkonen. If the figure of the god himself is quite different, how could we expect that there would be conformity as to his rather unimportant servant? In fact there is none, for the god Pikne changes himself into a boy, to get unnoticed into the devil's house: it is consequently the pretended servant of the fisherman who succeeds in sounding the famous *pill.*[1] I can not detect any real likeness to the Scandinavian traditions, where Loki in some cases is the companion of the thundergod, but if he has the wit to escape from the difficulties, Thor has after all the strength necessary to annihilate the trolls. On nearer examination all the advanced similarities prove to be unimportant or even simply fade into nothing.

---

[1] Cf. in var. 13: *põengahusse sarv*.

[2] Ibidem, p. 164.

[3] This is, of course, confirmed by our analysis of the Finnish folk-tale, where he is nowhere mentioned.

---

[1] This is the case both in the Finnish and the Esthonian tale and must belong consequently to their original form.

CHAPTER VI

LOKI AND THE BRISINGAMEN

1. Criticism of the literary sources

In the present chapter we have to face a problem of Scandinavian mythology that is particularly difficult owing to the scantiness and incompleteness of our sources. Moreover there are two different myths that have nothing in common but for the names of Loki and of Freyja's jewel. As one tradition is fragmentary, the other one unreliable, they are discouraging material for the scholar, who wants to arrive at a definite conclusion about the real meaning of this myth.

The first tradition tells about a fight between Heimdall and Loki on account of the Brísingamen. Properly speaking we possess only some allusions scattered over several chapters of the Snorra Edda. The most extensive information is furnished by ch. 8 of the Skáldskaparmál. Here the author gives for Heimdall a series of kennings: *Hvíta-áss*, *Loka-dólgr* and *mensækir Freyju*. As an explanation for the latter circumlocutions he adds the following sentences: »Hann er ok tilsækir Vágaskers ok Singasteins; þá deilði hann við Loka um Brísingamen; hann heitir ok Vindhlér. Ulfr Uggason kvað í Húsdrápa langa stund eptir þeiri frasǫgn, ok er þess þar getit, at þeir váru í sela-líkjum.» Again in ch. 16, where he speaks about Loki, he mentions among the kennings *þjófr Brísingamens* and *þrætu-dólgr Heimdalar;* but adds moreover one stanza of the Húsdrápa.

This stanza is our most valuable and practically our only source. Since, according to the Laxdælasaga, this poem was written on the occasion of the building of Oláfr pái's famous hall, we know exactly at which date it has been composed: in 983, at a time when the Christian religion had not yet been officially adopted in Iceland, but foreign influences were rapidly submerging the old heathen traditions. Unfortunately this stanza is very obscure; it runs in this way:[1]

Ráðgegninn bregðr ragna
rein at Singasteini
frægr við firna slœgjan
Fárbauta mǫg vári;
móðǫflugr ræðr mœðra
mǫgr hafnyra fǫgru,
kynnik óð, ok unnar
átta, mærðar þǫ́ttum.

We are obliged to enter here into the details of a philological interpretation. The subject of the first half is, according to the interpretation, advocated by *F. Jónsson: ráðgegninn, frægr ragna rein- / -vári*, that is »the ingenious, famous protector of the way of the gods». Here, however, there are two difficulties to be noted: 1. *rein* has not the meaning of »way, road», but it denotes originally the untilled strip of land between two fields. It is not uncommon in skaldic kennings [2], but then it always means »land», never »road». Hence it is more likely that Heimdall is called »the defender of the borderland of the gods». 2. The awful tmesis *rein- / -vári* is suspicious; *E. A. Kock*, who tries to do away with such artificial stylistic curiosities proposes [3] *reinar*. Then, however, the line counts seven syllables.

---

[1] Skjaldedigtning IB p. 128 but with a few emendations.

[2] Lexicon poeticum² p. 462 s. v.

[3] Notationes Norrœnae § 1952.

F. Jónsson reads the half stanza »(Heimdallr) bregðr við (Loka) at Singasteini» and translates »Heimdall goes together with Loki to Singasteinn». The rendering of *bregðr at* c. dat. as »to go to» is quite improbable; Jónsson says[1] very prudently: this seems to be the most natural explanation, although *bregða* is nowhere used in this meaning». *E. A. Kock*[2] call this translation also rather impossible, but does not give a better one in stead of it. We might expect, however, that *bregðr* c. dat. of an object means as usually »to take suddenly away». Then the construction of the sentence must be the following *bregðr Singasteini*. Hence Singasteinn is not the name of a reef in the sea, but it denotes the jewel itself. Snorri has known the reading *rein at Singasteini* and he has come to the conclusion that the proper name meant a certain place, obviously the same as *Vágasker*, found in another stanza, which he unfortunately has not preserved for us. The better and older reading may have been *reinar Singasteini* an interesting confirmation of Kock's suggestion to read *reinar* in stead of *rein at*.

Heimdall takes the jewel away *við firna slœgjan Fárbauta mǫg*. *Við* c. acc. is not used to denote »together with» but it means »in opposition to, against». Hence the meaning of this part of the stanza is: »Heimdall took the jewel away from Loki».[3]

For the second part of the stanza we must follow the interpretation, proposed by *E. A. Kock*[4]: *kynnik óð mœrðar þǫttum*, i.e »I show poetical genius in the different parts of my poem». The rest consists of the words: *móðǫflugr mǫgr átta ok einnar mæðra* (= Heimdallr) *ræðr fǫgru hafnýra*, which of course can only mean »he was in possession of the beautiful jewel» evidently as the result of his taking it away from Loki.[1]

---

[1] Lexicon poeticum² p. 62.

[2] Notationes Norrœnae § 420.

[3] Another possible translation would be: »he violently struck the stone against Loki» (cf. the expression *bregða e-u við e-n*); but this is rather difficult to bring into connection with the remainder of the stanza.

[4] Notationes Norrœnae § 1890.

This is all we know about this myth. Is it the beginning or the end of the story? For the tale has had a tolerable length; Snorri even says: *Ulfr Uggason kvað í Húsdrápa langa stund eptir þeiri frasǫgu.* Still his information is despairingly scanty. We are able to detect the following details:

1. Loki took away the jewel; hence the kenning *þjófr Brísingamens.*
2. Heimdall made an effort to get it back; cf. the kenning *mensækir Freyju.*
3. Loki had a fight with Heimdall, apparently in the sea.
4. They were both transformed into seals.

Perhaps we may piece these scraps of information together in this way: Loki had stolen the jewel, but Heimdall persecuted him and succeeded after a fight in the shape of a seal in recovering it. Then the stanza which has been preserved is the end of the story. But this is by no means certain, because we have no proof, that the kenning *þjófr Brísingamens* for Loki is in connection with this myth; it is even more probably that it refers to a myth, preserved in the Sǫrla þáttr, to which we will turn presently. If we must leave out this kenning in the reconstruction of the myth of the Húsdrápa, the circumlocution *mensækir Freyju* gains a much greater importance: it is Heimdall who made an effort to come into possession of the jewel and he did so by fighting Loki.

But we may perhaps even go farther. The jewel is called *hafnýra* »kidney of the sea». This evidently denotes a kind of precious stone to be found in the sea; that is why the two antagonists have to fight for it in the shape of seals. It is a piece of amber, used as an ornament since the most remote period of prehistoric times. *Vágasker* is a name for it, a clear kenning meaning »the rock of the billows». An other name seems to be *Singasteinn*.[1]

---

[1] Ibidem § 1952.

If we call this jewel, that came into the possession of Freyja — as is commonly done — *Brísingamen*, we are only combining information from other sources with this stanza of the Húsdrápa; here, however, we do not find any allusion whatever to it. It is the authority of Snorri, which leads us to this statement, for he says in ch. 8 of Skáldskaparmál: (Heimdallr) *er ok tilsækir Vágaskers ok Singasteins: þá*[2] *deilði hann við Loka um Brísingamen.* As it is not safe to rely exclusively on the statement of Snorri and being on our guard against rash conclusions, we will return to the discussion of this question after having studied the second myth of Loki and the jewel.

It is preserved in the Sǫrla' áttr, a rather recent tradition inserted in the compilation of the Flateyjarbók. The main subject of the ' áttr is the story of the famous Hjaðningavíg, that is said to have been brought to an end by Ivarr ljómi, a warrior of king Olaf Tryggvason.[3] An introduction is added to it, telling about Sǫrli, who fought with Hǫgni Hálfdanarson and who afterwards contracted a fóstbrœðralag with him. Properly speaking this does not belong at all to the real subject of the story, although the þáttr is named after this part.

---

[1] I am of opinion that these words can not be explained as geographical names; it would be surprising if the locality, where the fight took place, had two names. *Pipping*'s interpretation of the names as poetical circumlocutions for the localities in Uppland Singö and Vaxön (cf. his Eddastudier III in *Studier i Nordisk Filologi* XVII, 3 p. 128) is nothing more than a mere guess, reminding of the theories of *Ture Hederström*. — *F. Jónsson* explains the word Singasteinn as »old stone» (Maal og Minne 1931 p. 148); he connects it with goth. *sineigs*. As no other traces of this word are left in Old-Norse (with the exception of the highly problematic siŋōstēR on the runic stone of Tune) this explanation is likewise very uncertain.

[2] þá, not þar. Again an argument against the topographical meaning of the preceding names.

[3] Flateyjarbók I, p. 275—283.

A second introduction, prefixed to the story, tells the following myth: Four dwarfs, called Alfrigg, Dvalinn, Berlingr and Grerr, make a precious jewel. Freyja wants to have it, but must pay for it with one night of love spent with each of the dwarfs. Loki, who knows about this scandalous bargain, tells it to Othin, who, however, as the only reward for his information compells him to steal the jewel from Freyja. In the shape of a fly he enters into the well-locked room of the goddess, whom he finds sleeping with the jewel round her neck. As a flea he gives her a sting, whereupon she makes a movement by which the necklace can be unfastened. Freyja, missing it the next morning, claims it back from Othin who wishes to return it only on this condition, that she succeeds in bringing two mighty kings into an everlasting battle.

Freyja executes this order by means of a curious device. She changes herself into a woman, named Gǫndul, and sits down at three different times at a place, where she is sure to meet Heðinn. The first time she advises him to fight Hǫgni: the result is that they rather unexpectedly swear blood-brotherhood. The second time she gives him a potion of oblivion and suggests to him the abduction of Hǫgni's daughter. Finally she gives him a narcotic to lay upon him the *álǫg* of the everlasting fight.

This part of the þáttr is rather confusing and badly composed. It is obviously pure invention to account for the spectral battle, in Christian times supposed to be the result of a curse, only to be taken off by the most Christian king Olaf Tryggvason. The author of this romantic story makes great use of heathen adornments; he knows that

Othin in those former days fixed the supreme hour of death for every hero and that it was the valkyries who had to execute the orders of the Lord of Battle. But he does not know what has been once the real underlying idea of this belief; he makes Gǫndul into a vile sorceress and he explains the everlasting battle by a curse, an álǫg, emanating from Othin.[1]

But the people in this autumn of Old-Norse civilisation were not so easily satisfied. They were unable to accept the explanation of these matters of ancient lore by a quickly understanding belief; so, like curious children they inquired about all the particular details of this queer curse. Story-tellers easily hit upon some explanation or other in the storehouse of mythological antiquities: the witch in the wood had some reason for lying this curse on the fighting heroes and Othin also had some reason for compelling her to do so. A combination with the ever quarrelling Othin and Freyja was ready-made; a myth was grafted upon the heroic tale, although in such a poor and careless fashion, that a real unity did not ensue.

The myth of the theft of the jewel surely was not invented by the author of the þáttr; in this case we might expect a better and more logical coherence between the different motives. On the other hand it is not probable that he left the original tradition untouched; it is more likely that he remodelled it according to thirteenth-century taste and that he sadly spoilt it. Hence the question: which part was added afterwards and what was the primitive form? We only can make a guess, and this in a most loose and haphazard way. The trick of Loki has been long recognised as the motive of a well-known folk-tale (Aarne-Thompson Nr. 560), although its peculiar form in the þáttr shows strange deviations from the ordinary form.[1] If we subtract this as a later borrowing the bare fact remains that Loki once stole a precious object in a cunning manner.

---

[1] Cf. *R. C. Boer*, Untersuchungen über die Hildesage in the Zeitscheift für deutsche Phiologie XL, p. 12—19.

It is Freyja's breastjewel, that Othin wished to possess and that Loki without any obvious reason is compelled to fetch for him. We observe that this myth does not tally at all with the ordinary scheme of such tales: here Loki has to repair the wrong he has previously done, whereas in the þáttr he has only had the imprudence to indulge in scandalous gossip. Moreover he is not compelled to fetch an object for Othin, that has been lost, but a thing the stealing of which may be expected to gravely vex his compromised wife.

This can not be the original structure of the myth. But our effort to penetrate into the core of this puzzling tale of scandal does not yield the secret of its proper meaning. On the contrary, what we retain are the poor and scattered fragments of an irretrievably lost mythical world. It is an example of conjugal dissidence between Othin and his wife, known from the days of the Langobards; it is Loki scheming some trick; it is finally a divine jewel made by some dwarfs. But whenever we wish to grasp these motives in their real mythological meaning, we are deluded: the ruse of Loki is an ordinary folkloristic motive and the dwarfs bear names that easily betray the fact of their being invented. Dvalinn has been borrowed from the Edda, Alfrigg from continental literature, Berlingr and Grerr most probably from the realm of some author's fancy. We may safely finish this unpromising investigation by saying that for the study of Loki this tale is unable to yield any valuable information. This Loki is the stereotyped trickster of so many fabulous stories, only somewhat clumsily acting out of his character.

---

[1] Cf. *Panzer*, *Hilde-Gudrun* p. 164 and *E. Ó. Sveinsson*, Verzeichnis isländischer Märchenvarianten, FFCommunications Nr. 83 p. XXXVII sqq.

2. The myth of the Brísingamen

If we combine all these various details we arrive at this conclusion: Loki and Heimdall have been fighting for the possession of a precious piece of amber, endowed in 10th century tradition with poetical terms as *Singasteinn* and *Vágasker*. Snorri tells us that it properly belonged to Freyja and that its ordinary name is *Brísingamen*. On the other hand there is a very fantastic tale about a jewel of Freyja, but where its proper name is not mentioned. How did Snorri know that this brooch was named Brísingamen? He mentions two kennings where this word occurs; in ch. 16 of Skáldskaparmál the expression *þjófr Brísingamens* for Loki, in ch. 20 *eigandi Brísingamens* for Freyja. But we are not entitled to conclude that Snorri actually had found these kennings somewhere in a poem, that has been lost afterwards. They are of a rather prosaic character. Kennings with the present participle *eigandi* such as he freely mentions in the last named chapter (*eigandi Valfalls ok Sessrúmnis ok fressa, Brísingamens*) are nowhere to be found, neither in Eddic nor in skaldic poetry, unless in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries[1]. Hence Snorri has not found these figures in actual poetry; he has composed them himself. We must bear in mind, that the poetical expressions he mentions in his manual for skalds are only partly drawn from authentical sources; a considerable amount has been invented by him to show how a special type might be used.

We can not but admit that our material is rapidly melting away before the fire of our inquiry. Again, where did Snorri get this name from? There is one, but only one poem where it occurs and, curiously enough, this is one of the latest Eddic poems, the Þrymskviða, where we read twice

---

[1] Cf. *hugar eigandi*, Skj. II B p. 268 and *ǫglis túns eigendr*, Skj. II B p. 573.

(st. 15 and 19) *men Brísinga.* As I have argued in the above quoted paper[1], at the time Snorri wrote his treatise, this poem had not yet been incorporated in the collection of Eddic poetry; of course this does not imply that it did not exist; it may indeed have been composed some time before but not yet have arrived at such a venerable age that it was deemed worthy of figuring among the genuine tales of the gods.

Perhaps the reader may protest that as early as the tenth century we know from the Haustlong (st. 9) the kenning *Brísing girðiþjófr* for Loki. This does certainly prove that Loki as the thief of such a precious object was known centuries before Snorri. But a *Brísings girði* is not the same as a *Brísingamen.* Neither is the singular Brísingr an equivalent of the plural Brísingar, nor can we say that a belt and a jewel are synonymous.

From Old-Norse tradition we learn the following facts:

1. Loki is the thief of Brísings girði (Haustlǫng, 9th century)
2) Heimdall and Loki have a quarrel about a piece of amber called Singasteinn (Húsdrápa, 983)
3) Loki is the thief of a precious collar of Freyja's, that bears no particular name (Sǫrlaþáttr)
4) The jewel of Freyja is called Brísingamen (Þrymskviða, Snorra Edda).

Of course we may piece this information together in this way, that the Brísings girði is the same as the Brísingamen, that furthermore the piece of amber, mentioned in the Húsdrápa, properly belonged to Freyja, that lastly the author of the Sǫrla þáttr has omitted the name of Freyja's jewel, although it was known as Brísingamen. Moreover we may argue, that if Loki has thrice stolen a precious jewel, this object must have been the same in all three cases.

---

[1] Tijdschrift voor Nederl. Taal- en Letterkunde XLVII, p. 296.

But we may take the tradition also in a different way. If Loki has thrice stolen a precious jewel, it must be granted that it is probable, that there exists a close connection between these tales, but it does not follow, that they were practically the same. They may have been developments of an original motive, that in course of time took very different forms. In fact, they have done so, for obviously a battle in the sea is not precisely the same as Loki's trick in the shape of a flea. Here we observe the results of mere story-telling: Loki as the thief of a jewel was a theme that could be elaborated in different ways.

This is why I prefer to take the four tales as the succeeding stages of the literary treatment of a motive. The heathen traditions (Nr. 1 and 2) tell about a belt called Brísings girði and a piece of amber called Singasteinn. There is not the faintest trace that they ever belonged to Freyja. In much later time we find a quite romantic tale about the collar of Freyja's, which has been stolen by Loki; the form in which it is told does not tally with the usual conception of this god; we get the impression that it is pure fiction. This jewel is called in sources belonging to the 12th and 13th centuries *Brísingamen.* We do not know, how old this name is.

I must begin with emphasizing the fact that the available tradition gives no indications regarding the mythical meaning of the jewel. That it should have indicated the sun is a mere supposition, for wich the affirmed fire-nature of Loki seems to be the strongest support. *Much* in his paper on »Der germanische Himmelsgott» proposes to consider the myth as an intruder upon an older story about the theft of fire. As an argument in its favor he mentions the disguise of Loki as an aquatic animal, here a seal and in an other tale, which we will presently discuss (§ VIII, 1), a salmon. But the conception of Loki as a fire-demon in this latter tale is also highly questionable; so we can not use it as an argument for the same (supposed) character of the god in a quite different myth.

Much has compared the name Brísingamen with on. *brísingr*, norw, *brising* »fire», the verb *brísa* »to flame, to glitter» m. icel. *brísheitr* »qui percaluit». But of course this does not prove either that this jewel has been substituted for a spark of fire, or that it might have meant the sun. It would be a no less intelligible name, if it simply indicated a »brilliant jewel»[1].

Hugo Pipping has in one of his excellent treatises on Eddic mythology[2] submitted the view, that the Brísingamen originally means »the aurora borealis». Accordingly he explains the word as jewel of the Brísingar, which is to be accepted as a plural[3]. The Brísingar are the flames of the aurora borealis, in fact valiant men fallen in battle. This opinion seems to me quite unacceptable. If according to *U. Holmberg*[4] with the Tlingits of Alaska and the Laps the aurora borealis is supposed to be a heavenly flock of warriors, fallen in battle, this does not imply that the idea of Valhǫll necessarily must go back to this natural phenomenon. There are indeed more examples of the belief that only the brave, who died in war, went to a heavenly abode or that they were gathered to a distinct place.

---

[1] The suggestion of *R. Eisler*, Weltenmantel und Himmelszelt p. 161 that it perhaps might be connected with the collar of stars belonging to the Dea Mater, venerated in Minor Asia (cf. the jewel-studded collar of the Ištar Belit-Ilâni), which the learned author moreover himself calls an unsettled question, finds as far as I see, no support in the Old-Norse tradition.

[2] Studier i Nordisk Filologi XVII, 3, pp. 126 sqq.

[3] In note 1 on p. 129 he says that the form Brisings in Haustlǫng has no value whatever against Brísingamen to be found in the þrymskviða 12 and in the Snorra Edda. But here it is not the opposition of one example against two, but of a very old source against two recent traditions. So we can not discard the form Brísings so easily. And if one does not accept my opinion about the late date of the þrymskviða, the proportion of one source with the singular name and one other with the plural form does not prove the greater reliability of either of them.

[4] Valhall och Världsträdet, Finsk Tidskrift 83, p. 337 sqq.

This belief is wide-spread among the Finno-Ugric peoples. Holmberg quotes an old account of the Ostiaks religion [1], where it is said: »If the beasts of the forest tear one asunder, or if one is shot in battle, his soul goes upward, but the souls of those dying a natural death at home go downward». He quotes some other examples and mentions in this connection the belief about the aurora borealis [2]. It is not quite certain if this belief is so very old; Karjalainen is of opinion [3] that heaven as a dwelling-place of the dead is only to be found among the more southernly tribes and that it is of tartarean origin. Hence the connection with the aurora borealis may be also recent. At any rate without this motive we find a corresponding belief among many other peoples. Among the Fiji a soul can not be admitted to the Happy Land before he has proved that he has died a violent death. Otherwise he must go back to the upper air and die respectably i.e. violently [4]. The same holds good for the Mortlock-islanders: the souls of those who fell in battle are carried by the war-god Rasim to his special heaven, where *the combat is continued* [5]. The Aztecs believed also that the warriors fallen in battle went to a special heavenly abode, the house of the sun. The same is said about the Indians of Central America: those who die at home go into the earth, but those who die a violent death go upwards to Tamagastad and Çipattonal, where the sun rises [6]. Obviously Frobenius is right when he says[1], that in a warlike tribe death on the field of battle implies a happy life in the other world and it is not surprising that we find the same belief among the heathen Scandinavians and the Caraibs, as well as in many other places of the globe.

---

[1] The Mythology of all Races IV, p. 80—81.

[2] See also his examples about Siberian tribes, ibidem p. 488.

[3] Die Religion der Jugra-Völker, FFComm. Nr. 41, p. 189—190.

[4] *J. E. Harrison*, Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion p. 575.

[5] Sir *James Frazer*, The Belief in Immortality III, p. 119.

[6] *W. Krickeberg*, Märchen der Azteken und Inkaperuaner, Maya und Muisca pp. 31 and 213.

The explanation of Pipping is moreover based upon the supposition that the tale of the Sǫrlaþáttr represents an original myth, especially in as far as the Hjaðningavíg should have been a direct consequence of the theft of the Brísingamen. If this jewel is lost, the aurora borealis has disappeared. To get it back a new slaughter of warriors must take place to act as flashes of light. This is indeed very ingenious, but one may ask why the warriors who died at an earlier time and hitherto formed the aurora borealis have disappeared all of a sudden. What is the relation between the jewel and the fallen warriors, both being mythical representations of this same polar phenomenon?

So it is not clear to me why the Brísingamen should be identified with the element of fire and how the story of the fight between Loki and Heimdall in the shape of seals can be reconciled with the conception of the jewel as the aurora borealis. I consider it to be a dangerous method to connect the superstitions of primitive peoples with very recent and romantic sagas in order to arrive at an original meaning of a mythical representation the traces of which are not to be found in the oldest sources.

Therefore we may ask if this precious jewel indeed has any definite mythological meaning. *Hans Jungner* shares the same doubt[2]; the goddess Freyja possessed of course a necklace just as any mortal woman and only in course of time it became incumbent upon mythographers to find a special explanation for this ornament. The original form, however, is the necklace, not the very complicated myth about it. This seems sound reasoning and therefore we might ask, if it could not be somehow connected with the *Brosinga mene* of the Beowulf, which Pipping is obliged to deny.[1]

---

[1] Erlebte Erdteile III, p. 62.

[2] Cf his book Gudinnan Frigg och Als härad, p. 141.

Many years ago [2], *Sophus Bugge* drew our attention to the singular fact that there is a curious coincidence between the Hāma (= Heimir) of the Anglosaxon poem and the god Heimdall in the Húsdrápa. This may be more than a simple whim of chance. It is indeed rather surprising that Heimdall figures as an active person in a mythical tale and besides that as an opponent of Loki. It is not to be denied that a purely heroic tale about Hāma, who fled from Eormenric with a precious jewel (as Walther and Hildegunde escaped from this tyrant with large treasures) may have been cast to the mould of a mythological tale. Still the differences are great. If Hama's jewel is a ring, in the Húsdrápa it is a piece of amber. In the Beowulf nothing is said about a struggle for its possession, which on the contrary is the principal motive of the Húsdrápa. We might observe that the brief mention of the jewel in the Old-English poem by no means exhausts the whole story about it and that a Scandinavian poet of the 10th century may have heard more and fuller information than is available to us. But it is clear that we are apt to become entangled in the thicket of endless conjectures if we wish to proceed on this way.

Finally how must we explain the queer alternation of the words *Singasteinn* and *Brísings girði* (or *Brísingamen*)? The Anglosaxon word *Brosinga mene*, transmitted to Old-Norse tradition may have gradually changed into a form like *Brísingamen*, which had at any rate the advantage of being somewhat intelligible. Several scholars have refused to acknowledge the identity of the words on account of the difference between the vowels; but then they only took into consideration the possibility of an original connection between these names. If, however, the Old-Norse tale is an adaptation of an Anglosaxon heroic story, we can expect that arbitrary changes have taken place in the period of transmission; of this fact we have indeed several instances, the most conspicious being that of Sigfrid and Sigurðr.[1]

---

[1] L.c. p. 129.

[2] In Paul und Braune's Beiträge XII (1887) p. 69 sqq.

Did Ulfr Uggason somewhere in his long account about the fight between Heimdall and Loki make use of the name *Brísingamen?* It is not impossible, but nothing more can be said. What we know is this: he names the jewel with skaldic kennings, such as Singasteinn and Vágasker. The first name is of course not to be explained as a mere shortening of the real name. But some sort of pun may be intended: did he choose this kenning, because it unmistakebly reminded one of the real name Brísingamen? If so, we may suppose, that the word was rather arbitrarely composed, since it was not so very easy to find an expression at the same time different from and reminiscent of the real name. I venture to suggest that a word from an Anglosaxon source has slipped into the skaldic poem: *sigle ond sincfæt* the Brosinga mene is called in l. 1200 of the Beowulf and the word *sinc* as well as its numerous compounds are of common use in Old-English poetry. Has a word *sincstán*, which actually occurs in Anglosaxon, been imitated by a Norse poet and slightly adapted to a form more congruent with the proper name Brísingamen?

I should not like to take this idea for more than a possibility. Still it may show us once more, how grievously little we know about many so-called myths of the Old-Norse tradition, indeed so very little that there seem to be no limits for hypotheses that may be constructed in every possible direction.

---

[1] Cf. A. Heusler, Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum LII, p. 97 sqq.

In the myths of the Brísingamen Loki is a mere name Has he ever been more than a name? Has Loki ever had in any original form a real rôle, by which his character was clearly defined? We must confess that we are absolutely ignorant in this respect. I wish to sum up the results of this chapter in the following way:

1. In the Sǫrla]áttr Loki is the cunning trickster, but in a debased and untraditional form. He is the hero of a simple folk-tale.
2. The fight between Heimdall and Loki is utterly obscure as to its real meaning. It may be that it never had any mythical meaning at all especially if it is an adaptation of a foreign tale. For the study of Loki's character it is a worthless source.
3 The fight in the water and the disguise in seal-shape are likewise quite incomprehensible. It would be the utmost arbitrariness to conclude on the base of these unreliable mythical tales that Loki stood in some particular connection with the element of water.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHARACTER OF LOKI IN OLD-NORSE MYTHOLOGY

1. Loki in his relation to Othin and Thor

In his paper »Myterne om Loke» *Axel Olrik* has tried to make a clear distinction between two different types of Loki. In a few traditions he is closely connected with Othin and Hœnir; we have treated them in our IVth chapter. As Olrik accepts the identification of Loki and Lóðurr, he credits to this group: the myths of Andvari and Iðunn, the creation of mankind, the Lokkatáttur and the English magic formula.

In other mythological tales Loki is the companion of Thor. The examples are the tales about Utgarðaloki and Geirrøðr as well as the Þrymskviða. We might ask if this distinction implies a different character of the god? In answer to this question Olrik invests a list of myths according to the function of Loki.

1. He tricks the trolls. Examples: Lokkatáttur, the birth of Sleipnir and the myth of Andvari. Although he has nearly the same character in the Þrymskviða, it may be argued that this belongs essentially to the Loki of the Othin-group.
2. Loki falls into the power of the giants and is obliged to free himself. Examples: the myths of Þjazi, Geirrøðr, Andvari. Although two of these traditions show him in the company of Othin and only one as the

follower of Thor, Olrik ventures to conclude that this Loki should have been more particularly the servant of the thundergod. He considers the Esthonian myth to belong to the Thor-Loki group.

3. Loki as a thief. Examples: the myths of the Brísingamen and of Sif's hair; moreover the Esthonian myth. By making a slight addition Olrik shows that this character of Loki also belongs to the Thor-Loki group.

After having divided the extant material in this way, Olrik tries to combine it with a geographical distinction: Othin-Loki is found on the Faroes, but Thor-Loki »in its typical purity» appears in the Esthonian myth; hence the conclusion is rather easy: Thor-Loki belongs to a more eastern, Othin-Loki to a western group. Olrik concludes his argumentation with the exclamation: Now the problem is solved, why Loki has a double position in the world of the gods: two religious traditions, differing both in character and in place, have been mixed up in Eddic mythology[1].

These rather rash conclusions show the weak points of Olrik's method. Our investigation has led us to the rejection of the Esthonian myth as a reliable tradition and at any rate as unrelated to the Scandinavian Loki-tales. About the originality of the story in the Lokka-táttur we enounced our serious doubts. Two pillars of Olrik's system are broken down. It is curious to observe, that Olrik in his endeavour to explain the difficulties of the Eddic tradition has sought help from popular tradition, nay he has even give more credit to the Faroese ballad and the Esthonian folktale (in Kreutzwald's text!) than to the most venerable relics of Old-Norse literature. Indeed, again a strange overestimation of popular traditions, which are considered to be so important that the Eddic tradition may be judged by it.

I do not wish to follow this way. Olrik arrives only at his conclusion by a rearrangement of the material. The types Othin-Loki and Thor-Loki are not clearly distinguished by the character of their myths; on the contrary in real tradition they seem to occur in the same kind of tale. This weakens the validity of Olrik's theory; the method, however, is not sound either. If it is true, that Loki presents himself in two quite distinct characters, then this must become evident from the myths, told about him, and it is to be expected that the Old-Norse sources give more valuable material than later distorted popular traditions. The myth of Sleipnir's birth does not stand on the same level as the Lokkatáttur nor the myth of Þjazi on that of the Esthonian folktale. Again, if we make a distinction into three types of Loki's character, they must not overlap each other; but they do this in Olrik's system. The Andvari-myth shows the types 1 and 2, moreover at the same time the Othin-Loki and the Thor-Loki: the Esthonian tale belongs likewise to the types 2 and 3. The Iðunn-myth disappears altogether from the scheme, as does the tale of Utgarðaloki. In fact, there is here no distinction in the character of Loki, as he is found in the three groups of Olrik: Loki as a trickster of the giants and as a thief apparently is the same sly, mischievous deity.

---

[1] Festskrift Feilberg, p. 551—554.

The reasoning of Olrik is quite arbitrary. The different myths, cleverly arranged, do not show a clear tripartition, but Olrik has forced the mythological material into the mould he has prepared beforehand. His starting point was the undeniable fact that Loki is allied to Othin as well as to Thor; but he has made the mistake of using all the traditions from heathen times onward to modern popular lore (even of a foreign people) without making any clear distinction for the reconstruction of the original types.

2. The double character of Loki

If there are two or even more types we must make it clear in what way they differ from each other. This does not depend upon the motives of the mythological tales; Loki as a thief may be the same deity as the trickster of giants. And secondly, if there are two or more types it does not follow that they are distinct in time and place. Again I must insist upon the fact, too easily forgotten, that the historical analysis of the material is not the most important task of our investigation, but that we must try to arrive at an understanding of the mythical traditions as religious phenomena.

Is there indeed any difference in Loki's character, as he appears in the myths, we have hitherto discussed? We may begin with a short survey of the motives, occurring in these tales.

In clipping Sif's hair Loki makes mischief against a goddess without any reason (Sif 1). The ensuing tale of the contest between the dwarfsmiths presents him as compelled to repair his fault (Sif 2), but it is again of his own free will that he entices the dwarfs into a contest (Sif 3). In the myth of the giant-builder he gives advice that goes wrong (Finn 1); then he is compelled by the gods to make it good again and he plays a trick on the giant (Finn 2). In the tale of Þjazi, he begins with an attack upon the giant-eagle, that takes the meat from him and his companions (Þjazi 1); then the giant compells him to steal Iðunn (Þjazi 2) and finally the gods induce him to bring her back (Þjazi 3). In the myth of Geirrøðr he has the imprudence to venture into the neighbourhood of a giant (Geirrøðr 1); consequently he must free himself by bringing Thor without his weapons to the giant's home (Geirrøðr 2). On this journey he is nothing but a mere companion of the god (Geirrøðr 3). In the tale of Utgarðaloki he is likewise only the humble servant of the thundergod. The myth of the Brísingamen presents him as being compelled by Othin to rob Freyja (Sǫrli). The prose-introduction of Reginsmál states, that he kills the otter without any reason (Andvari 1); later on he is sent away to catch Andvari (Andvari 2). In the Þrymskviða he is the cunning companion of Thor and succeeds in deceiving the giants. Finnally in the Lokkatáttur he acts quite independantly of Othin and Hœnir.

We may tabulate these different motives according to the following principle:

A. The main distinction is, if he acts voluntarily or under compulsion.
  1. Loki acts voluntarily
    a. to the detriment of the gods (Sif 1, Finn 1)
    b. to the detriment of the demons (Sif 3, Þjazi 1, Andvari 1, Lokkatáttur)
    c. without any definite purpose (Geirrøðr 1)
  2. Loki acts under compulsion
    a. compelled by the gods (Þjazi 3, Andvari 2, Finn 2, Sif 2, Sǫrli)
    b. compelled by the giants (Þjazi 2, Geirrøðr 2)
  3. Loki acts as a mere companion (Geirrøðr 3, Þrymskviða, Utgarðaloki).

This method of classification shows at any rate, that Loki acts under some sort of compulsion in more cases than of his own free will. The preponderance of the former group is really much greater than is shown by our tabulation, for among the examples under 1 a and 1 b there are some doubtful cases, wich perhaps ought to be removed. In the beginning of the tale about the giant-builder Loki gives advice that turns out badly, although he obviously has not the intention of injuring the gods; he was not compelled to do so, but as the gods are deliberating about the decision to be taken, the frame of this tale corresponds with that of the examples under 2 a. With regard to the tales, grouped under 1b, the Lokkatáttur must be dropped as altogether unreliable.

Andvari 1 is clearly a case of reckless violence; he kills the otter, but does he know that this will have such serious consequences? Again the case þjazi I shows slight differences from the type 1b; nobody compels him to beat the eagle, but at any rate he does it on behalf of his companions. Moreover he only defends his right and is unaware of the danger he exposes himself to. Hence the only clear cases of Loki doing some mischief purposely are Sif 1 and Sif 3. We have already shown that this chapter of the Snorra Edda is very loosely constructed and we have no certainty whatever that it exactly renders the motivation of the original story. In fact Sif 1 is of no importance: when a myth tells that the hairs of a goddess are made by the dwarfs, then it is only natural to suppose that the real hair by some accident has been destroyed; cf. the Irish myth about the silver hand of Nuadu. The malefactor is easily found in Loki, but the arbitrariness of the conclusion is shown most emphatically by the fact, that Loki has no reason whatever to act in this brutal way: *Loki Laufeyjarson hafði þat gǫrt til lævísi, at klippa hár alt af Sif.*

In the second group Loki rather often acts under the compulsion of the gods; in most cases he has to atone for some mischief (þjazi 3, Andvari 2, Finn 2, Sif 2). When he is constrained by the demons, he can only free himself from captivity by yielding to their wishes. In such a case he is not to be held fully responsable for the mischief done. This leads us to the question: what is his relation to the gods and the demons? The following classification may demonstrate it:

B. Loki's relation to the gods and the demons
  1. Loki acts to the detriment of the gods
    a. voluntarily (Sif 1, Finn 1)
    b. under compulsion (þjazi 2, Geirrøðr 2, Sǫrli)
  2. Loki acts to the detriment of the demons

a. voluntarily (þjazi 1, Sif 3, Andvari 1, Geirrøðr 1, Lokkatáttur)
b. under compulsion (Finn 2, Sif 2, þjazi 3, Andvari 2)
c. as a mere companion (Geirrøðr 3, Þrymskviða, Utgarðaloki).

This result is surprising. Only 4 cases under B1 against 12 under B2. Moreover the examples under 1 are not to be judged equally. If Loki does a mischief to the gods under some sort of compulsion, this is of course meant as an excuse for such monstrous treachery. On the other hand he will not needlessly put himself into the power of the demons; hence he must be compelled in this case also. The reason for the compulsion in the cases 1b and 2b are absolutely different. Now, if the cases under 1b show Loki only reluctantly doing evil against the gods, the most important cases for his enmity against them are Sif 1 and Finn 1. I may refer to my previous discussion: Sif 1 is an arbitrary addition of some myth-monger (or of Snorri?) and Finn 1 belongs probably rather to the same exceptional cases as Andvari 1, for he acts inconsiderately and is thereby the cause of serious danger to the gods. But it is he again, who has to avert it, and he does it to the entire satisfaction of the gods.

We arrive at the following conclusions:

1. Loki is more often a foe of the demons than of the gods. In the latter case he is represented as the victim of the consequences, for being captured by a troll he can only free himself from death by complying to its demands. On the other hand he shows his enmity to the giants, sometimes without any apparent reason; in those cases, where he is compelled to acts of violence his reluctance is explained by his fear for the danger he has to face.
2. The motives of his deeds are not the same in all the examples. If he is constrained to these actions, this obviously does not prove anything either for or against

his character. In one single case he acts from pure malignity, but Sif 1 is no real myth at all. More commonly he acts without considering the possible consequence of his deed (Andvari 1, Þjazi 1, Finn 1, Geirrøðr 1). As far as the structure of the story is concerned, this is decidedly an extremely poor motive and it does not do credit to the sagacity of Loki, however much this is extolled in other tales. Certainly it is an important fact that all these cases occur in the introductions of the myths, that is in those parts where additions and arbitrary changes are most common. From a mythological point of view it shows the indifference of Loki's deeds as to his relation to the various classes of supernatural beings. He does not act with any definite purpose, he does not place himself in a position of enmity against either gods or giants; he is more of a mischiefmaker, who avails himself of any possible opportunity and who is himself afterwards much surprised at the extent of the injury.

3. There is no reason to make a distinction between different conceptions of Loki. He is always the same person, but the tricks he plays show him constantly in a different position towards the gods and the demons, the two opposite powers between which the fate of the universe is in suspension. Hence it may seem as if he were a conscious actor in this world-drama; indeed, he is the only being that deals blows to both sides and Loki has consequently the appearance of being a deserter from the camp of the gods. We will presently have the occasion to discuss this view, which, however, although clearly taken in a group of myths, is quite out of place here,

On the whole the sources for these myths are rather recent. Most of them are only known from the Snorra Edda (Sif, Finn, Geirrøðr, Utgarðaloki). The Andvari-tale is told in the prose-introduction of the Reginsmál; we do not know at what time this exclusively Scandinavian accretion to the Nibelung-legend has been composed. Only the myth of Þjazi is of venerable age: it is told in Haustlǫng and consequently it was fully developed in the 9th century. Here we find also an allusion to the theft of the Brísingamen, although we are unable to decide if it belongs to the type of the Sǫrlaþáttr or of the Húsdrápa. At any rate we are warned by this important and fully reliable example, that the character of Loki, as we have described it, was quite developed at the time, when the very beginning of literary tradition sheds its faint light on the Teutonic past.

But our previous investigation has revealed to us the baffling fact, that the tale of Þjazi, even in its oldest attainable form, is not mythical in the proper sense of the word. There are too many simply folkloristic motives, too much composition and arrangement of originally independant elements, whilst on the other hand the real religious »meaning» is obscured by the literary treatment. This is, of course, still more the case in those tales, that are only known from the Snorra Edda. Here obviously centuries of pure myth-making, only inspired by literary predilection for queer stories of ancient lore, have distorted the real features. But, happily, this does not matter very much. For the character of Loki is sharply fixed and it remains in its constitutive elements invariably the same. Moreover the oldest attainable form in the Haustlǫng tallies completely with all the succeeding stages: Loki is not a deadly foe of the gods, on the contrary he is their companion and even in some respects more daring and active than Othin. But then the consequences are terrible for him and he is compelled by unforeseen circumstances to rob the gods of their most precious possessions. In fact he is the sport of Fate, that tosses him to and fro between the vengeance both of gods and giants.

CHAPTER VIII

LOKI AND THE ELEMENT OF FIRE

1. Discussion of the sources

In our introductory chapter II we have paid attention to different theories about the proper meaning of Loki; the hypothesis of his being a fire-demon gained the greatest number of adherants. Still the evidence for this character of the god is extremely slight and the old texts are at any rate not quite explicit. The following arguments have been adduced in favour of this opinion:

1. the etymology of the name Loki,
2. the myth of his being caught in the shape of a salmon,
3. the theory about his being the special companion of Thor,
4. the popular tradition about a fire-demon called Lokke.

As in questions of the interpretation of religious phenomena etymology is an unreliable guide, we might begin our discussion with the second point. In the 49th chapter of the Gylfaginning we find the following story about Loki after the death of Baldr. Loki fled from the gods and hid himself in a rocky place, where he built a house with a door in every wall. Sometimes he took the shape of a salmon and sported in the falls of Fránangr. Thinking over the devices the gods could possibly hit upon to catch him, he made a net, but then all of a sudden the Asir approached. He flung the net into the fire and leapt as a salmon into the river. The gods were unable to find him, but the cleverest of them, Kvasir, saw the traces of the meshes of the net in the ashes on the hearth and so the gods contrived to make a net themselves. But Loki eluded them for a long time, til at last Thor succeeded in seizing him between his fingers; that is why the salmon is thin behind.

Several scholars have asserted the close relation between this curious tale and a Finnish magic song about the origin of fire.[1] This magic poem [2] consists of different parts, distinguished by *Kaarle Krohn* in the following way:[3]

A. The fire was rocked in a golden craddle, but fell down owing to the carelessness of its guardian,

B. The spark fell into the lake Aloe or the Aloe-sea, which rose all in a foam and then dried up.

C. The spark was swallowed by a fish; a net was hastily made by passing it through the water with the current and against the current the fish was caught; it was cut open and the spark was found in its inmost part.

The third episode has some resemblance to the Old-Norse myth of Loki; this is explained by Krohn by the supposition that they both go back to a lost medieval catholic legend. The fact that no definite Christian tradition can be pointed out as the actual source, weakens of course the validity of this hypothesis; at any rate we are obliged to rely exclusively upon the internal evidence of our sources. As I am of opinion, that the connection between the Scandinavian myth and the Finnish magic song is all but proven, it will be necessary to enter into the details.

---

[1] Already Weinhold in Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum VII, p. 19.

[2] Printed in Lönnrot's Suomen Kansan muinaisia Loitsurunoja (Helsinki 1880) p. 336—340 »Tulen synty», cf. *K. Krohn*, Suomalaiset syntyloitsut (Helsinki 1917) p. 100—131, translated as Magische Ursprungsrunen der Finnen, FFCommunications N:o 52 p. 109—145.

[3] Cf. *F. Ohrt*, The spark in the water, FFComm. N:o 65 p. 3.

We may for convenience sake begin with the myth of Loki.

It consists of different episodes, to wit:

1. The frame of the tale; the flight of Loki after the murder of Baldr,
2. The invention of the net and the cleverness of Kvasir,
3. The capture of Loki,
4. The impression of Thor's hand on the salmon.

We may, of course, at once dismiss the last point as a simple aetiological legend well known in differents parts of Europe. Usually the grasp of a supernatural being serves to explain darker spots or lines on the fish.[1]

A much more difficult problem is presented by the second episode: the invention of the fishing net. Widely diverging views have been submitted to account for it, but on the whole scholars are inclined to consider it as a later addition to the story of Loki's capture. *A. G. van Hamel*[2] is of opinion that »it is not much like the cunning demon to provide his enemies himself with the means to seize him». Indeed, but on the other hand it may be thought a moving example of the irony of fate, as the most wily amongst the gods is betrayed by the faint traces of his own cunning. The gods were unable to hit upon such an ingenious idea; their enemy invented it for them and became the victim of his own invention. Of course, the motive itself, the first invention of the fishing net, does not originally belong to the myth of Loki, but its function in the tale as it appears in the Gylfaginning, is quite natural and does not show in itself that it could have superseded an other and older motive.

This is one of the reasons why I am unable to accept the construction of Van Hamel in the above quoted paper.

---

[1] *O. Dähnhardt*, Natursagen I, p. 201 and II, p. 180—183.

[2] Neophilologus XIV, p. 207.

He supposes that originally Loki should have been captured by means of the net of the seagoddess Rán. He bases this opinion upon ch. 31 (33) of the Skáldskaparmál, where Snorri explains the kenning *eldr Ægis* for »gold». The reason of it is the famous banquet in the hall of Ægir where all the gods are assembled as is described in the Lokasenna. Very acutely Van Hamel remarks that Snorri adds one phrase that properly speaking does not belong to the explanation of the kenning, for he says at the end: *þá urðu æsir þess varir at Rán átti net þat er hon veiddi í menn alla þá er á sæ kómu.* According to Van Hamel there is but one possible solution: the mention of the net presupposes that it played a rôle in the tale of Loki's capture: the gods, assembled in Ægir's hall, and planning how to catch the murderer of Baldr, see this excellent implement and borrow it from the sea-goddess. This is indeed a very plausible solution; it is, however, not the only possible one.

Why should Snorri not have added a small detail to a story, he only quotes to explain a kenning, not for the sake of its contents? This chapter is a theoretical exposition of different sorts of poetical language; he is not at all interested in the myth itself. When he says: *Rán er nefnd kona Ægis en níu dætr þeira, svá sem fyrr er ritat*, we are not allowed to conclude from it that these nine maidens were present at the banquet. So it is with the net. Snorri has such an amount of knowledge about heathen mythology, which he wishes to note down in his handbook, that he may easily unconsciously add a detail, not because it belongs to the story he is referring to, but because it furnishes a new piece of evidence for his treatise on poetics.

On the other hand *Celander* is of opinion[1], that the invention of the net is a very original feature in Loki's history; the genuine character of it seems to be supported by Swedish words for the spider's web, where we find the name of this god: *lockanät*, *lockasnara*. This is a question of method, to which I will return, when I wish to discuss the folkloristic traditions about Loki. But the combination of a net and the spider's web is so self-evident, that it may appear more than once. In a description of the Ojibway superstitions the Jesuit missionary Allouez says[1] about their god *Michabous*, »que ce fut dans ces Isles (Michilimakinak), qu'il inventa les rets pour prendre le poisson, après avoir considéré attentivement l'araignée dans le temps qu'elle travaillait à sa toile pour y prendre des mouches».

---

[1] L.c. p. 18.

In my opinion two motives belong indissolubly to each other: the net and the fish-shape of Loki. If the net, in some way or other, is the most original motive, than Loki must appear in the shape of a fish; if on the other hand the myth related that Loki changed himself into a salmon, then of course it is most natural to catch it by means of a net. Now Loki as the inventor of a net is a motive absolutely unparalleled in Northern mythology: he never invents an implement useful to mankind. But he very commonly assumes different shapes, and it does not matter which form he takes, if it is only fit for the aim he pursues. We have mentioned his disguise as a horse, a seal, a flea or a falcon. He seems to be at home in every element. Hence it is quite unwarrantable to conclude from the tale about his capture that he has some particular connection with the element of water. Moreover the myth is not necessarily of high antiquity, because the elaboration of his punishment seems to belong to a later stage of development. Then a mythographer may have combined different motives in order to compose an interesting tale.

If this is the case, the most important feature of the myth is the shape of the salmon. It was to be expected that Loki should change himself into an animal, that is not easily captured.[1] Perhaps the red colour of the salmon, especially of the char (*salmo salvelinus*) may have led to the idea of some connection with fire or lightning. *Dähnhardt* mentions an example of the belief, that salmon are afraid of thunder; then they lie motionless in the water.[2] Thor being the professional pursuer of the demons, it may be surmised, that Loki changed himself into a salmon, because popular belief knew, that there was a contrast between this fish and the thundergod. On the other hand, if Loki had already been brought into some connection with fire, as we found this clearly expressed in the myth of Thor's visit to Utgarðaloki, then the red colour of the salmon might easily suggest the idea of Loki especially taking the shape of this fish. In the short rendering of the myth by Snorri the red colour is not particularly mentioned, but if this fish belonged to the land-locked kind [3], its colour was known to every one. A fish of a red colour in connection with fire is found in the Finnish magic song »Tulen synty»; we meet with a curious parallel among the American Indians, where fire is extracted from a red salmon.[4] But I do not want to take this as a mere suggestion; I am fully aware of the fact, that by the word *lax* in the Gylfaginning nothing is said about the particular species and that as Prof. *Liestøl* had the kindness to tell me, nowhere in Norway has the popular belief about a connection between salmon and fire or thunder been found.

---

[1] The Jesuit Relations 54, p. 200.

---

[1] Popular tradition in Norway still knows the rhyme:

Dersom eg var saa god te' højre
som eg er te' sjaa
saa skulle ingen mann paa Lande
meg faa.

Cf. *Joh. Th. Storaker*, Naturrigene i den norske folketro, Norsk Folkeminnelag XVIII, p. 267.

[2] Natursagen II, p. XII.

[3] I refer to the kind, known in England as *char*, in Germany as *säbling* or *rotforelle*, in France as *omble chevalier*. The Norwegian name is *kolmunn* (salmo carbonarius, not to be confused with the *kolmule* or gadus melanostomus).

[4] *U. Holmberg*, Aika 1918 p. 31.

It is, however, the supposition that the Loki-salmon is a kind of fire-fish, that the alleged connection with the Finnish magic song is based. Krohn has treated this question in a very careful investigation and he gives as its result the following possible similarities[1] : the linen net, the ashes, the reiterated fishing of the salmon and the fear of the sea. Those similarities are, indeed, very frail: if it had been established beforehand that Loki is a fire-demon and consequently his salmon-shape a manifestation of his nature, then we might lend some colour from this fact to these meagre correspondences. But since the conception of Loki as an embodiment of fire would find one of its strongest supports in a close relation between this myth and the Finnish song about the origin of fire, we must very carefully weigh the importance of these possible similarities.

The difficulty of catching the fish is a most natural motive and it seems to me of particular importance that in the details there is no connection whatever between the Scandinavian and the Finnish poems. The three efforts of Thor and the way in which Loki escapes the net, drawn through the river, are quite unknown in the »Tulen synty», where we find as the cause of the failure of the first efforts, that the net has been drawn awkwardly.[2] It is likewise of very slight importance that the material of the net is the same: *lingarn* in the Norse myth and in a Finnish variant of Ingermanland: *yöllä liina kylvettihin.* The magic qualities of linen may account for the use of this material.

---

[1] He says very cautiously: mahdollisina yhtäläisyyksinä.

[2] Cf. the words: nurin nuotta potkittiin, väärin veettihin apaja.

Furthermore Krohn mentions »the ashes». If we have in mind the interesting motive in the Scandinavian tale, where Kvasir sees the traces of the burnt net, we can not but feel that this argument, if it really were solid, might be sufficient to prove the connection between the two traditions. Unfortunately this is not the case. The Finnish song does not know this very peculiar motive and when it tells about ashes, it is in quite a different sense: the ashes are the result of a woodland being burnt down in order to get a soil fit for cultivation: a well-known primitive way of tilling the ground. In a variant from Karelia the ashes are not mentioned at all[1], but sometimes we find lines such as:

hara vanha poltettihin
siihen liina kylvettihin,

where the ashes, at any rate, are presupposed and in one variant of uncertain provenience, where a certain being, called Tarsilainen, is burnt in his iron boat (a not original motive in this magic song!) the poem continues:

sen kypenet kylvettihin
peltohon perittömähän
maahan manterettomahan,
siitä kasvoi kaunis hamppu,
pensi pellavas hikesi.[2]

There is, indeed, no connection between the motive of the ashes in both traditions. Whereas it has in the Gylfaginning the very singular meaning of furnishing the pattern of the net, it is in the »Tulen Synty» only an unimportant accessory of the burning of the forest.

---

[1] *Krohn*, Suomalaiset syntyloitsut p. 113.

[2] Ibid. p. 114. The words mean: The glowing ashes were sown on a field without borders, on a land without bottom; from it grew beautiful hemp, spread flax in all directions.

Finally the fear of the sea. In the Snorra Edda it is said, that it is dangerous for salmon to go into the sea: *var þat lífsháski at hlaupa á sæinn.* Krohn combines this with the Aloenmeri, mentioned in the Finnish formula, which he explains as an equivalent of the Dead Sea. In the Christian formula, that might have been the source of both the Scandinavian myth and the »Tulen Synty», the scene of the action was the river Jordan and the Dead Sea. But is it probable, that the idea of the curious nature of this sea could have been preserved during the various migrations of this Christian magic song throughout Europe and finally should have survived even in its adaptation to a heathen myth? In fact, we must try to find more natural explanations for this curious detail. If Loki had transformed himself into a fresh-water salmon, we might connect the fear of the sea with the fact that this salmon never goes outside the rivers. But this is after all not less hypothetical than the opinion of Krohn. We have, however, other and simpler ways of explaining it; the motive is a necessary complement of a tale, where a fish is to be caught in a river: one might ask why Loki did not try to escape into the infinite ocean and this was indeed a very decisive answer. One might even suppose that it is the last trace of a more detailed form of the myth, where the mouth of the river had been obstructed by the gods in order that Loki could not escape that way.[1] If there are so many possible solutions for this unimportant detail we need not recur to the Aloenmeri of the Finnish magic formula.

---

[1] The Scandinavian tale is not very clear. First the gods drag the net throug the river, Loki escapes by hiding himself between the pebbles on the bottom. Then they make a second effort *upp til forsins* (hence landwards), but Loki sees *at skamt var til sævar* and leaps over the net *upp í forsinn.* We get the impression that the gods went not landwards but in the opposite direction. The second time Thor himself wades through the river *ok fara svá út til sævar.* But then the gods must have known that here escape for Loki was impossible. Or did the tale not take so much trouble about these details, prompted by our intellectual way of reasoning and is it only a later redactor who tried to smoothe away the incongruities?

When we compare the myth of Loki and the »Tulen Synty» there is but one motive common to both: the making of a net. This is, however, in either case a rather subordinate element of the tale. For the comparison of different folktales we must constantly bear in mind that the similarity of one single feature is not sufficient to prove the identity of these tales; this is a principle of all sound philological criticism. But if, as in the present case, the motive is moreover found in two widely different forms, there is no reason whatever to suppose that they should both have been derived from a non-existant original tradition *viz* a medieval Christian legend.

The case would be different if we might consider both poems to express in one sense or other a mythical conception of the element of fire. If Loki as a fire-demon took a salmon's shape, we might suppose, that this salmon had also a peculiar connection with fire. The idea of fire, however, being concealed in the salmon is not only nowhere expressed, but there is no place for it in the structure of the story. It is possible that Loki has been, perhaps on account of the similarity between his name and the word *logi*, conceived of as a kind of fire-demon and that this was the reason for choosing the red-coloured river-salmon as a convenient shape for him, but this does not yet prove that the real significance of the myth has anything to do with the origin of fire. It is nothing more but another instance of myth-making in later times, when the heathen gods were a suitable subject for literary treatment. We must be cautious on our painful way of investigation lest we form too rash conclusions from such scanty material. On the one side we are threatened by the Scylla of seductive but very unreliable folklore traditions, on the other side we are faced by the Charibdis of untraditional, arbitrary myth-making by antiquarians, whose Christian faith is equally strong as their love for the glorious past of their people.

2. The fire-nature of Loki

Now it is time to resume our discussion of the arguments in favour of the hypothesis, that Loki originally was a fire-demon. We have cancelled the witness of etymology, we have tried to demonstrate that the myth of Loki's capture can not be brought into a close connection with the Finnish magic formula of the Tulen synty. The third point to be discussed is his relation to the thundergod Thor, which, however, I have not been able to demonstrate as an original and reliable belief (see ch. V, § 5). As to the evidence of modern popular belief, I will have the opportunity to treat this question at full length in chapter XII.

Here we may draw our conclusions with regard to the Old-Norse material. And these conclusions can only be negative. The myths, where the fire-nature of Loki is accepted by the majority of scholars, are but a very frail base for such a hypothesis. Neither the contents of these myths nor the particular form of their motives are sufficiently explained by the fire-theory. In my opinion the real meaning of these obscure tales remains unintelligible, if we take Loki to be a fire-demon or not. If this is the case for instance in the myth of Loki's capture we may ask: is the salmon-shaped Loki the thief of a spark of the heavenly fire? If the gods succeed in catching him, does it mean that he is only a very unsuccessful Prometheus, as the fire after all comes back into the possession of the gods? And moreover, what is the reason of the fire-god being persecuted by the gods; has it anything to do with fire's relation either to mankind or to the gods? Or else is Loki only a malicious demon, whose original connection with fire is of no importance for the right understanding of this particular myth? The fact, that we are able to put these questions without the possibility of getting any satisfactory answer from the theory that advocates the fire-nature of Loki, tends to prove that the evidence is but exceedingly slight.

On the other hand I do not wish to deny that we may get ever and anon a faint indication of some tendency to such a conception of Loki. I have accepted it without any hesitation in the case of the contest between Loki and Logi. There may possibly be more examples of it. But they do not prove that his character from the very outset is that of a fire-demon, nor even that he has been clearly understood as such in the heathen period. If there is no single myth, that is based exclusively upon this fire-nature or can be only explained by it, we must arrive at the conclusion that the few cases, where he shows any connection with fire are only accidental accretions to his mythical character.

One may ask, what is then the reason that Loki although originally not a fire-god, afterwards became considered as such? In the myth of Thor's journey to Utgarðaloki it is clearly the great resemblance between the words Loki and Logi that has brought about the eating contest of the god and the giant. Here, however, the fire-nature of Loki is not clearly defined. On the contrary he loses because he is inferior to the voracious element, that consumes the meat and the vessel at the same time. An other explanation might be afforded by the fact that he belongs partly to the demons, even to those who are most dangerous to the existence of the world and the supremacy of the gods. Hence it will now be appropriate to consider those tales where he is pictured more like a demon than a god.

CHAPTER IX

LOKI AS THE ENEMY OF THE GODS

1. Loki in the myth of Balder's death

According to the account in the Snorra Edda it is Loki who by directing the missile of the blind Hǫðr causes the death of Baldr; on the contrary there is no trace of his activity to be found in the tale Saxo Grammaticus gives in his Gesta Danorum. Two possibilities present themselves to account for this curious fact; on the one hand we may assume that Loki is an intruder upon the myth, only added to it in the West-Scandinavian tradition; on the other hand he may have played a rôle from the very beginning and then he has been dropped in the more romantic form of Saxo, who made a pure heroic tale from an original myth.

The advocate of the former opinion is *E. Mogk;* the latter view is supported by both *G. Neckel* and *F. R. Schröder.* Theoretically they are equally possible and besides the testimony of our sources we must rely upon the admissibility of the conclusions arrived at on the base of this hypothesis. Neckel has in his monography on Baldr tried to explain this myth by means of a far-reaching influence of religious cults and representations current in Asia Minor. Whether we have to explain the similarities between these traditions as mere parallels, or as the consequence of historical influence, is a question that Neckel has not clearly settled; I am of opinion that the distance between Iceland and Asia Minor is rather great, even if we accept the Gothic people as a connecting link. Hence it is not very probable, that a rather complicated religious myth should have travelled so far. Moreover the explanation, Neckel gives of the transmission, is highly problematic: the poet who first created the legend of Baldr was a man who heard two myths among the Goths of the Donau, not from a Gothic but from a non-Germanic (perhaps a Thracian) narrator, *viz* one myth about Atys and another about Ishtar; this man has composed two different poems which he recited at a South-Scandinavian court.[1]

We may put forward the following objections. 1. It would be the result of pure chance that these Asiatic myths spread to Scandinavia. If this hypothetical poet had only heard one single myth or if he happened to have been a less successful poet, the supposed chain of tradition would have been broken and no Baldr myth would have come into existance. 2. The distinction between the migration of the cult itself and of the poetical traditions attached to it, is a serious drawback to this theory. Why should a skald himself not have arrived at a poetical treatment of a religious belief, that had won access long before the time he wrote, and why should it be necessary for a Scandinavian poet to travel again to the Black Sea in order to collect fresh material for the literary treatment of the myth? 3. If the state of affairs had been so complicated as Neckel suggests, it would have been impossible to deduce this series of events from the extant sources; this seems to me an overestimation of the possibilities of a philological comparative method.

The way by which the cult came to the North is left by Neckel much more in the dark than that of the supposed poems. In fact, here I see a new and very serious objection to this theory. We are credited with accepting the fact that during a couple of centuries as the result of the traffic on the so-called »Gothic road» right through Russia, the cult-forms of Attis had travelled to the North and that on this base a Baldr-cult had originated in Scandinavia. But a tale, once heard, may easily be retold elsewhere; that is what happens every day. How could such a tale, however, have been so impressive that the religious system of the Scandinavians was affected by it? It would seem to demand a real cult, but a cult is quite different from a mere tale. I do not believe that the Scandinavians of those days, having seen some thrilling religious performances in Eastern Europe and perhaps having been initiated into their mysteries, could have succeeded in introducing a new cult into their native land. This is particularly questionable, if, as Neckel himselfs asserts, this new cult showed a totally different character from that of the Scandinavian practices. Moreover the curious resemblance to fertility-rites, still known in modern Teutonic folk-lore, suggests rather the idea of high antiquity and originality. If Eastern influence imposes itself by the weight of accumulated evidence, then I would be prepared to accept the fact that on an original religious representation expressed as well in cult as in myth, new elements of foreign extraction were grafted. But then it becomes again higly questionable if the meagre material of Old-Norse tradition will allow us to make a clear distinction between the native and the foreign elements.

---

[1] Die Überlieferungen vom Gotte Balder, p. 224.

But even if we accept Neckel's explanation, what about the rôle of Loki? He is of opinion that the figure of the malicious enemy is ancient, but he is not able to find an exact prototype for him. On the whole the Egyptian Seth seems to come nearest to the Scandinavian traitor. At any rate he must come from Asia Minor, because the strong distinction between good and bad is typical of Persian belief. This argument may be true, but then it does not follow, that this non-Teutonic character of Loki has been developed under the Asiatic influence in the Baldr-myth, nor that the way of this influence should have been the »Gothic road». The Christian belief might have been of some importance too in this connection!

Obviously the distance between the Icelandic Loki and the Egyptian Seth is too great for Neckel to connect them directly with each other. The German scholar *F. R. Schröder* has tried to bridge this gap by supposing an intermediate form in Asia Minor. The resemblance, however, between Loki and Seth is only very vague, being mainly the mutual character of dangerous enemies of the gods, Seth killing Osiris and Loki causing the death of Baldr. As a further confirmation of his hypothesis Schröder reminds us[1] of the punishment of Seth according to the tradition of the Thebaic royal tombs that shows a greater resemblance to the myth of Loki; the likeness is not so very persuasive as it mainly lies in the fact, that they are both bound, a very usual punishment for a criminal. The office of Isis to watch the chain by which Seth is fettered, is quite different from the task of Sigyn, for Isis must prevent Seth from setting himself free, whilst Sigyn, filled with compassion for her disgraced husband, collects the ever falling drops of poison in a vessel.

According to Schröder Loki was originally a god of vegetation (cf. ch. II), but he appeared at the same time as a fire-demon. Then this deity reminding one of the Greek Prometheus, was connected with the fettered giant of the Caucasian mountains (according to Olrik's theory) and finally the influence of the Egyptian Seth (presumably of his Asiatic prototype) constitutes the last step in this evolution. By trying to conciliate the different theories about the origin of Loki Schröder has not succeeded in giving a coherent explanation of this enigmatical deity.

Before accepting, however, this rather complicated development, let us study its real foundations. We can hardly do it in a more efficacious manner than by submitting ourselves to the guidance of *E. Mogk*, who has most energetically denied, that Loki originally has had any rôle in the drama of Baldr. He has first pointed out in his lucid treatise about Snorri's treatment of mythological traditions[1], that Loki is nowhere called the murderer of Baldr with the exception of the Snorra Edda; he has, criticising Schröder, afterwards treated the subject in a new paper[2], where he puts forth the following arguments:

---

[1] Germanentum und Hellenismus p. 112 sq.

1. In all ancient sources (such as Vǫluspa, Baldrs draumar, Hyndluljóð and Saxo Grammaticus) Hǫðr is exclusively the murderer of Baldr.
2. There is no kenning in the total extent of Old-Norse poetry with an allusion to Loki's rôle as the slayer of Baldr.
3. Only Snorri knows Hǫðr as the blind god.
4. The prose-end of the Lokasenna does not combine the punishment of Loki with the death of Baldr.

Hence the most important questions to be answered are: *a.* What is the form of the myth in the Vǫluspa? *b.* How are we to explain the Lokasenna?

To begin with the Voluspá. E. Mogk says that st. 32—34 form an independant section, where the death of Baldr is related. It terminates with the formula *Vituð ér enn eða hvat?* Then a new scene is presented: the binding of Loki (st. 35) again finishing with the same sentence. I am very much convinced by Mogk, that this points rather to a succession of two quite independant myths. In the short survey of Baldr's death we are informed that Hǫðr was the real murderer of Baldr; this is expressed most clearly by the words *Hǫðr nam skjóta* and by the kenning

---

[1] Novellistische Darstellung mythologischer Stoffe Snorris und seiner Schule, FFComm. No 51, p. 11 sqq.

[2] Lokis Anteil an Baldrs Tode, FFComm. No 57.

Baldrs andskoti. It is the same conception as in st. 9 of Baldrs draumar:

Hǫðr berr hávan hróðrbarm þinig;
hann man Baldri at bana verða
ok Óðins son aldri ræna.

Moreover the scene of the Vǫluspá is perfectly worked out to a conclusion; after this treacherous murder a terrible revenge is taken: the sun of Othin being only one night old kills Hǫðr. In fact here is no place at all for Loki, he is not mentioned either in the perpetration of the crime or in the revenge for this odious murder. To the mind of a heathen Scandinavian the act counterbelanced by the revenge was in itself complete. And if Loki had been the real culprit, a poet like the author of the Vǫluspá might be expected to lay the whole burden upon him, not upon the obscure Hǫðr. From this treatment of the tale we do not get the impression of a heinous villany, but of a lamentable catastrophe. The two opponents are Baldr, the valiant god and Hǫðr, the incarnation of the battle. It might be supposed that f.e. a dioscuric pair of deities had fought against each other with the sad consequence that one slew the other, without violating the testimony of this source in the least.

The mention of Loki in st. 35 must then belong to a new part of the poem. In fact it does. At st. 34 the vǫlva terminates the history of the past; from this moment onwards she will only speak about the preparation of the Ragnarok. She begins with an enumeration of the demoniac beings, who menace the cosmic order: first comes a description of the different places, where the trolls and the giants await the moment of their terrible attack. Foremost the horrible abode of Loki, then the dwellings of the giants and the feeding of new monsters by the old hag in the Ironwood. After-this the signals for the final onslaught are given: the cocks in the world of gods and demons begin to crow.

Indeed, the conclusion of Mogk seems well supported by facts and it is largely because we are accustomed to look through the spectacles of Snorri, that we are induced to make a connection between st. 35 and the preceding ones. It may be quite the contrary: Snorri came to the conclusion that Loki was punished on account of the death of Baldr, because he wrongly interpreted the series of stanzas in the Vǫluspá. His craving for logical order and causal connection made him seek for an explanation of the 35th stanza, where Loki is described as a prisoner. If this stanza describes a definite period of the god's life, then we should ask: what is the reason of this severe punishment and the idea might easily present itself, that we could be able to find the answer in the preceding tale of Baldr's death. But st. 35 is only meant to show the deadly foe of the gods in a place, where he awaits the day of his final revenge: it is the place and the personality not the history of Loki, that the poet wishes to mention here. If Mogk is right in his assumption, we must conclude that Loki has developed into an enemy of the gods quite outside the Baldr-myth proper and we are faced by the problem as to how this has come about.

I do not expect that in such an exceedingly obscure matter as the problem of Baldr and Loki the combined arguments of Mogk and the present author will convince those scholars, who hold an other view, but at any rate I will assume that the conclusive force of this part of the Vǫluspá in favour of the opinion, that Loki, even according to this poem, has been the principal actor in the drama of Baldr, is somewhat weakened and can not be used without any restriction.

What requires a closer investigation at present is the Lokasenna. Mogk contends that in the prose at the end of this poem the fettering of Loki is represented as a punishment for his sneering at the gods. This is of course questionable as this prose tale need not belong originally to the poem itself. The testimony of the st. 27—28 is of more importance. Here Frigg says in answer to a very insulting remark of Loki:

Veitstu ef ek inni ættak   Ægis hǫllom í
   Baldri líkan bur:
út þú ne kvæ̨mir   frá ása sonom
   ok væri þá at þér reiðom vegit!

Thereupon Loki retorts with the following stanza:

Enn vill þú, Frigg   at ek fleiri telia
   mína meinstafi:
ek því réð   er þú ríða sérat
   síðan Baldr at sǫlom!

It is accepted commonly that this poem supposes Loki to have caused the death of Baldr, but Mogk takes a different view of the question: Loki here makes an allusion to his preventing the return of Baldr from Hel by refusing to weep in the shape of the giantess þǫkk.[1] Indeed, this is quite possible, but it can not be proved. One might be inclined to urge that the words of the stanza *er þú ríða sérat síðan Baldr at sǫlom* only mean his not coming back from the underworld. If Loki only wished to say, that he was the cause of Baldr's death, he might have expressed himself in the same way as Frigg did: »I am the cause that he is not present in the hall of Ægir». But he says: »It is my fault that you do not see him riding towards the hall» and so he lays particular stress upon the fact, that Baldr is not in the same position as the other gods, but may be expected to arrive from an other place. Although I am inclined myself to take this explanation as the most natural rendering of this much discussed stanza, I am fully aware of the fact that it is only a possible interpretation, that does not even impose itself. Therefore I will cross over to the opposite standpoint and accept the fact, that this stanza is an allusion to Loki having been the *ráðbani* of Baldr.[1]

---

[1] This has already been observed by Niedner, Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum XLI (1897) p. 306.

In a previous chapter (VIII) I have discussed the opinion of *Van Hamel* who has written the best and most exhaustive study about the prose frame of the Lokasenna.[2] Here he comes to the following conclusion:

1. The gods meet in order to start the persecution of Loki who has caused the death of Baldr. Loki lives as a salmon in Fránangrsfors, where he is caught with a net Loki's punishment (Prose-frame, Gylfaginning ch. 49).

2 a. The net used for the catching of Loki is the net of Rán the sea-giantess (Skáldsk. ch. 33; also in the original prose-frame).

2 b. *Later variant:* The net was made by the gods themselves, although they only imitated Loki's own invention (Gylfaginning ch. 49).

3. In connection with 2 a: the meeting of the gods is identified with one of their feasts in the hall of Ægir and Rán (prose-frame, Skaldsk. ch. 33).

4 a. Loki ventures into the hall himself, where he slays Fímafeng, one of Ægir's servants (Prose-frame, Skáldsk. ch. 33).

4 b. *Later variant:* the slaying of Fímafeng is supplanted by Loki's quarrel with the gos (Lokasenna).

---

[1] This does not imply that I accept the view of Neckel l.c. p. 61 and *Schröder* l.c. p. 110, that the expression *ek þvi réð* means, that Loki is not the actual perpetrator, but only the auctor intellectualis, for I agree with Mogk, FFC 57, p. 4 that the verb *ráða* simply means »auctorem esse, efficere».

[2] Neophilologus XIV, p. 214.

I can only admire this sagacious interpretation of the different traditions about Loki's appearance in the hall of Ægir. It is moreover a logical development from a very simple beginning to a highly artistical ending; one might perhaps ask how it came to be, that at stage 4 a such a very unimportant detail as the slaying of Fímafeng was inserted and how this motive was connected with the punishment of Loki. But this is only a question of detail. The main result of Van Hamel's study is, that we have to separate the poem itself from the prose-frame and that they both represent different traditions about Loki.

Then we may ask, whether the Lokasenna necessarily supposes that the god is considered by the author as the murderer of Baldr and that he is punished for this crime. One might argue in the following way: the poem itself only tells about Loki's appearance at a feast of the gods, where he insults the guests present and finally escapes after setting the hall on fire. It is not said that the gods are deliberating about his crime, nor that he is caught and fettered afterwards. Van Hamel has observed this with great acumen[1]; the text of the poem implies that Loki is not seen in the hall until his unexpected appearance in st. 6. Nevertheless there must be some reason for Loki not being present at the feast: in st. 2 Loki is told by the cook, that the gods are boasting of their arms and prowess and that their words are not friendly to Loki. Moreover the crowning crime of Loki's career, says Van Hamel, the treason against Baldr, has been perpetrated (according to st. 28) before the quarrel with the gods, which is the subject of the Lokasenna.

The first argument, however, is not of much importance. At a time when Loki had gradually developed into the foe of the gods, whatever the reason may have been, a poet might have invented a scene, describing the gods assembled at a meal and being of an unfriendly disposition towards Loki, who has not been invited. But it does not necessarily follow that the reason is the death of Baldr. Quite on the contrary, when Loki expresses his resolution to enter the hall, Eldir does not warn him because the gods are planning a terrible revenge, but because Loki by his sneering is likely to provoke them and induce them to an act of violence. If we read the second stanza in its context, we can scarcily interprete it in the way Van Hamel does, without adding that this is only a possible explanation and that it does not follow from the contents of the poem itself.

---

[1] L.c. p. 205.

Loki as the murderer of Baldr is inconceivable to me in this poem. How is it possible that Eldir does not leap into the hall announcing to the gods that the traitor has ventured into the lion's den? How is it possible that the gods, filled with wrath against the murderer, whose punishment they are planning, calmly suffer him to enter and that no one dares to take hold of the criminal? We know the poor pretext of the poet: Loki's appeal to the blood-brothership between him and Othin (st. 9). But then Othin could never have undertaken any act of violence against him! Why was there no other of the assembled deities to step in in Othin's place? It was not dangerous to attack him, for he was *ekki mikil vǫxtum* according to the Sǫrlaþáttr. Why had they to wait for the arrival of Thor? The prose-frame gives an other explanation: *þar var griðastaðr mikill.* Very inconsiderate of the gods, who are planning revenge for an atrocious crime, the more so because they had been prevented once from punishing Loki by quite the same impediment. But the idea is very interesting, as we find here a well-known situation: the gods are assembled in a *griðastaðr*, when there comes an enemy to insult them: it is only Thor arriving from distant regions, who is not bound by the sworn oaths and who may use violence against the intruder. This is in fact the case of Hrungnir (Skáldskaparmál ch. 17), where we find exactly the same situation; the gods are likewise prevented from taking revenge for his *ofryrði* because they had given *grið* to him. The parallelism of the two stories makes it fairly probable, that the situation of the Lokasenna is analogous: the insulting of the gods is the essential matter and the peculiarly spicy detail lies in the fact that the gods have prevented themselves from turning out the disrespectful boaster.

But what about the stanza 28, where Loki confesses that he has caused Baldr to be absent? In my opinion, so far from being an argument in favour of Van Hamel's theory, the stanza contradicts it clearly. We might expect that in a poem, treating of the vengeance of Loki, the acme of the story would be the moment when Loki himself boasts of his crime. Then the gods at last should have shaken off their strange torpor; they ought to seize their weapons, to shout at the impudent fellow and if they were not able to kill him, at any rate to take hold of him and to stop his insulting flow of words. Nothing of this kind happens. The tale runs quietly on.

If we considere the structure of the poem, we may divide it into the following parts:

st. 1—10	Introduction. Loki is given a seat among the gods,
st. 11—56	The senna,
st. 57—65	Loki is ousted by Thor.

In the very middle of the senna Loki says to Frigg, that he has prevented Baldr from coming to the feast. What is now the effect of his words? No threatening words of the gods, no turning away in disgust from this rogue, not even the slightest idea of a feeling that now the cup of insult is filled to its very brim. Freyja meekly observes:

> ǫrlǫg Frigg hygg ek at ǫll viti
> þótt hon siálfgi segi.

If the author of the Lokasenna was a real poet — and no one will probably deny that — he could not have written this silly episode if he had had one moment in his mind the situation Van Hamel postulates for the poem. He had quite a different plan: a highly amusing scene in the family of the gods (not unlikely similar ones on venerable Olympus) where Loki showers his impudent remarks upon the divine beings, man had long ago learned to despise. The only thing, that Loki may be expected to do, is clearly expressed in st. 4:

hrópi ok rógi ef þú eyss á hǫll regin
á þér muno þau þerra þat.

But Loki knows better: they are not even able to do this!

Moreover when Thor comes, he threatens to smash Loki to pieces; and again we ask: how is it possible that he is allowed to escape? Why do they not make use of this opportunity to seize the criminal as Thor may do without breaking any oath? The poet has not felt this necessity: he only shows us in a deliciously comical scene, how Loki is again insulting the newly arrived and dangerous opponent, whilst poor Thor can not do anything but stammer again and again:

þegi þú, rǫg vættr! þér skal minn þrúðhamarr
Miǫllnir, mál fyrnema.

Finally the poet himself clearly expresses the plan of the senna: it is the prolonged insult of all the gods by a sharp-witted Mephistopheles. Loki takes his leave, because the hammer of the thundergod obliges him to do so; but after all, he has had his say and even more than that:

(st. 64) kvað ek fyr ásom kvað ek fyr ása sonom
þats mik hvatti hugr!

Perhaps one might feel inclined to raise the following objection to my explanation. St. 28 of the poem implies that Loki has perpetrated a mischief against Baldr; hence the senna takes place in the time between his crime and his punishment. This makes it fairly sure, that in one way or another the situation is about the same as Van Hamel presupposes: the gods are assembled to plan his revenge and in this moment he appears.

But this conclusion is not obligatory. If we place ourselves on the standpoint of the poem (without the prose-frame), we only see the flyting scene of Loki: It supposes all kind of wicked deeds committed by the different gods. But it does not consider them in any chronological order; it does not show us Loki on a particular point of his carreer, when he has committed a series of crimes and revenge is awaiting him. If we accept such a chronological order, we are again under the impression of Snorri's systematisation. Then we suppose, that for a poet the different myths about the gods are linked together by their mutual relation. This is not necessary; it is even very improbable. If a mythographer tells us about the revenge of Brokkr, can he then fix the time when the lips of Loki were sewn together? Evidently not before the senna, for then there would have been a silent flyting. Between the senna and his final capture, however, there is no place for the episode of the dwarf. Or must we infer that the thread Vartari has been loosened and that Loki afterwards recovered his speech again?

The myths are not co-ordinated, they do not form one continuous history of the gods. They belong to different spheres of religious and mythological tradition; they are very often in contradiction to each other. A poet may take from the tradition whatever motive he wants, without being compelled to consider at the same time the causes and the consequences of it. Our author wanted to find the fiercest insults, Loki could hit upon; when he spoke to Frigg, of course the death of Baldr was present in his mind and it was particularly effective, because it was Loki himself who had played a part in it. But in the whole train of his thought this is only a motive, even a very subordinate motive, and the poet does not realise the exact position of the senna, he has invented, with regard to the premises of the Baldr-myth. This, indeed, lies beyond his scope. He has only found a very effective taunt, and afterwards he passes on to a new one, immediately losing the former one out of his sight.

It seems to me that from this point of view the meaning of st. 28 is not of very great importance. If we accept the interpretation of Mogk, the stanza only supposes that Loki played the rôle of the giantess Þǫkk; then the sequence of events has been: 1. the death of Baldr by Hǫðr, who acts on his own behalf. 2. Loki opposes himself to the returning of Baldr by refusing to weep. 3. The gods take revenge by killing the murderer and fettering Loki. This is, indeed, a possible reconstruction; Loki acts in his usual way by means of a cunning trick, by which he frustrates the fulfilment of the gods' wishes.

Afterwards the connection between stanzas 34 and 35 of the Vǫluspá and possibly also the combining activity of successive mythographers have enlarged the importance of Loki in the Baldr-myth; his preponderance in the Ragnarǫk may have had some influence too. So he became the real author of the crime and as Hǫðr could not be ousted from his place, Loki was put at his side as the malicious counsellor. This is however not less a hypothetical construction than any other attempt to solve the riddle.

If on the other hand we accept the theory, that st. 28 of Lokasenna presupposes the whole situation as it is described by Snorri, then our conclusion need not be changed in its essential parts. The development of Loki has taken place some time earlier than the literary activity of Snorri. But as I have pointed out in a previous chapter, we should not speak only of Snorri and his school, but also of his predecessors. We are ignorant about the exact time the Lokasenna was composed; at any rate it has been done by a poet, who lived in a time when the belief in the gods had altogether disappeared; in this Lucianic satire we even observe a supreme disdain for the most important heathen deities. Hence the eleventh century might be the terminus a quo and this period seems even rather likely as the Lokasenna gives the impression of having been inspired by hatred against pagan belief. But I will not stress this argument, for after all the senna is meant as a capital joke and if the reputation of the gods is torn to tatters, the fun is none the less great for it. Hence a poem like this may have been composed at any moment between the tenth and the thirteenth century. But if we take into consideration, that the skalds shun the use of kennings, containing the name of a god, in the period between 1050 and 1150 and that Loki himself[1] is not mentioned at all between 1000 and 1175, it seems more likely to me, that it belongs to the second part of the twelfth century.

After all this does not matter very much. In any case the poem is written after the collapse of heathendom. The conception of Loki, we find here, is not based on the original belief, but it is the fruit of later speculations, much more of a literary than of a purely mythological character. His participation in the drama of Baldr is not necessarily an element of his heathen personality; it is the consequence of later development and arbitrary combinations. Still one thing becomes clear by it: the Loki of this myth is quite a different deity from the cunning trickster, we have met with in the mythological tales, discussed in our previous chapters. Now he is the wicked demon, intent upon the destruction of the gods.

What may have been the reason of this development in malam partem? There are two possibilities, as far as I can see: 1. it is the result of a tendency lying in the character of the god itself: the trickster, who often makes mischief and is a serious nuisance to the other deities, is disposed to become a real enemy. 2. it is the consequence of foreign influences, by which this deity assumed the rôle of a malevolent demon, formerly unknown to the heathen pantheon. This question must, however, be left unsolved till we have discussed other examples of Loki's devilish nature.

---

[1] His relatives are mentioned sometimes, but the cases of Fenrir and Hel are quite different from that of Loki.

2. Loki and the Ragnarǫk.

According to the Snorra Edda Loki has caused the death of Baldr; he has been punished for it by being fettered in a subterranean cave and as the sworn foe of the gods he will be released at the time of Ragnarǫk. This is a series of events, so perfectly coherent and logical, that we are readily inclined to think that so the mythological conception must have been from the very beginning.

But after having seen that Snorri is a clever arranger and combiner of the traditions, that he had collected, we suspect that the same may have been the case here. In fact, if we read the Eddic poem, known as Baldrs draumar or Vegtamskviða, we do not find such an exactly fitting myth. On the question of Óðinn who may be the cause of Baldrs death, the vǫlva answers:

st. 9. Hǫðr berr hávan hróðrbarm þinig:
hann man Baldri at bana verða
ok Óðins son aldri ræna.

And when the god again asks, how Baldr will be revenged, she speaks about the birth of Váli, who will kill *Baldrs andskota.* No single word is said about the participation of

Loki[1]; still the poem mentions him as one of the most important actors in the drama of the Ragnarǫk, for in the last stanza the vǫlva says:

Svá komit manna meirr aptr á vit,
er lauss Loki líðr ór bǫndom
ok ragna rǫk riúfendr koma!

Hence the conception of the fettered Loki and his participation in the general upheaval of the world may be quite independant from his connection with the myth of Baldr. What is the relation between his punishment and the Ragnarǫk? One might suppose, that he was connected in some way or other with the final catastrophe and that afterwards he was supposed to have been fettered. But if this has not been originally the punishment for Baldr's death — as we conclude from the Vegtamskviða — then there seems to be no plausible reason for it. According to Axel Olrik[2] the combination of Loki and the Ragnarǫk is the consequence of his punishment, and his being fettered goes ultimately back to the Caucasian legend of the fettered giant.[3] In itself this can not be said to be altogether impossible; still it is a far cry from Iceland to the Caucasian mountains. Perhaps Christian influence may be taken into consideration also. The Gosforth-cross, now commonly dated from the 9th century, shows on its West side the figure of a sitting man, whose hands and feet are bound together. Before him a female being holds an object, that probably may be taken as a cup or a vessel.[4] This scene has been formerly considered as a representation of Loki's punishment; the woman may be compared with the faithful Sigyn who is said to hold a vessel in order to collect the drops of venom that are continuously falling on the fettered Loki. But since the cross has several other scenes, all belonging to biblical tradition, it is to be expected that the bound Loki and his devoted wife are not represented on this stone, but the persons of a Christian legend. Kaarle Krohn has ventured the suggestion[1], that they are Herodes and Herodias; the vessel, held up by the woman, being intended to contain the head of John the Baptist. This explanation is not very convincing, but that the scene is more likely to be biblical than heathen, seems to be proved by an interesting Norwegian tradition preserved in Setesdal.[2] The old wooden church of Austad is said to have had doorposts, that were beautifully carved. In the lower part there was to be seen a kind of cartouche. As Skar relates it: »Der var Mannlik utskorne. Paa den eina Tavla var ein bakbunden Mann som laag; eit Kvende heldt ei skaal uppyver han; ein Mann stod til Skrevs yver han til aa rista han upp med Sverdet; men ein annan meinka han det». This has obviously nothing to do with the myth of Loki, but it is, either a Christian motive, or a scene taken from some popular tradition about an epical or perhaps a local hero.[3]

---

[1] This is a new and very strong argument in favour of Mogk's interpretation of Vǫluspá st. 32—35.

[2] Festskrift Feilberg p. 560.

[3] Ragnarokferestillingernes Udspring, Danske Studier 1913.

[4] Good illustrations in Stephens' paper in the Mémoires de la Société royale des antiquaires du Nord 1882—4 p. 133 sqq; K. Krohn, Skandinavisk Mytologi p. 152.

Hence it does not seem necessary to agree with A. Olrik in supposing that the wicked Loki is a new type in the Scandinavian pantheon, imported from the East; the way in which this is explained, is also open to serious objections. For Olrik argues that Loki had developed into a wicked demon among the Goths in the time of the migrations under the influence of Christian ideas about the devil; afterwards the Caucasian legend would have added the new motive of the punished giant. This, however, constitutes a series of hypotheses which are of a very speculative nature. Is there any reason to suppose that the Gothic peoples have known the figure of Loki?[1] Have we any certainty about the time, when his development into a wicked demon took place? Is it indeed necessary to seek for an explanation outside Scandinavia?

---

[1] Ibidem p. 153.

[2] *J. Skar*, Gamalt or Sætesdal II, p. 32.

[3] The other cartouche is of the same character: four serpents attacking a man, also bound and lying backwards. The serpents are seen biting him in his breast, shoulder, stomach and legs.

It must be admitted that the theory of Olrik has the advantage of affording a coherent explanation of this side of the Loki-problem. But even though this system makes the impression of being more-probable, still it will be advisable to look for a solution that does not imply so many hypothetical suppositions. In fact, the idea of an opposition between the principles of good and bad is not clearly developed in the Old-Norse religion; but there is from the very beginning the clear antagonism between the gods and the giants. It is not an ethical distinction, but the deities are the preservers and defenders of the cosmic order, whilst the demons are the hostile inhabitants of »Utgard» who try to do damage to the world. This division of the supernatural beings into friends and foes is in complete harmony with the conception of an aristocratic warlike society. The development, however, into an ethical conception of this dualism supposes a different view upon the real value of life. The giants were not necessarily bad nor the gods righteous; in course of time this distinction became felt as the natural consequence of this antagonism. Does it follow that the reason was the influence of foreign religious conceptions? By no means. We might ask, how has it been possible that foreign ideas, based on a totally different conception of life, have been introduced into the North? Only as literary motives? As new and interesting tales about divine beings? Or as part and parcel of a religious system?

---

[1] The argument of the Esthonian myth about the thundergod has to be given up of course.

I am fully aware of the strong influence, which Christianity, especially by Irish intermediary, has exerted upon the Scandinavians. This is fairly certain, more certain at any rate than the connection with the religious traditions of South-Russia, the Caucasian mountains or Asia Minor. But the question must be put, if there have not been germs of this development among the Scandinavian peoples themselves. In the complex of the myths about Baldr and Loki, I see as the principal element the consciousness of man of the existence of sin and consequently his craving for redemption. This need not be the direct result of either Christian or Oriental influences. It may have arisen by the slow disintegration of heathen mentality, the breaking down of an outworn society. Those men, who only put their confidence *á mátt sín ok megin* were really on the verge of becoming the most fervent adherents of a religion that promised peace to a tortured soul.

Kummer has said that this belief in one's own power is not to be considered as reckless self-confidence [1]; not as the religion of a self-possessed atheist, but as the result of a devout feeling of security (»frommes Heimatbewusstsein»). It is difficult to believe it. If Kummer quotes as a proof for his conception the story of Hakon the good [2], we can not be easily convinced by it. For the words »the king does like all those who believe in their own strength and worship Thor» are meant as an excuse for his making the sign of the cross over the sacrificial horn. This is clearly a very awkward prevarication in this difficult situation and we must not conclude from it, that such was the ideal of the heathen warrior. More commonly we read about men, who do not want to make sacrifices to the gods and only put their confidence in their own strength.[1]

---

[1] Midgards Untergang (Leipzig 1927) p. 75.

[2] Heimskringla I p. 92.

Examples of this kind must not be pushed aside as misinterpretations in later Christian times. On the other hand the English scholar Routh is nearer the truth, when he says[2]: »if this mood was as general as appears from the evidence there must have intervened in the religious history of Europe an epoch of fleeting but magnificent heroism, in which man sought to overcome terror and despondency by ignoring them». But we must add: it was growing despondency they tried to overcome, not the final victory over it. The old religious system had gradually lost its grasp on the people; the turbulant life of the Viking Age had torn them away from the narrow homestead; the wild sea had tossed them from Norway to France or Russia and thence back again to Scandinavia; the scenes of murder and destruction had, after all, not passed through their mind without leaving any feeling of troubled recollection and remorse. The contact with the Christian world, the surprising heroism of nuns and monks, facing brutal death with a cheerful hymn on their lips, had taught them to appreciate other virtues than those they were acquainted with.

This might be sufficient to awaken the trouble in the soul of a man, who had lost the unshaken certainty of his heathen belief. To throw away the draff of an outworn religion, to take refuge in the undaunted recklessness of a man independant of gods and priests, is easily done. But is it heroism? Or is it weakness, that shrinks from confessing its craving for divine protection? It is impossible to make a definite statement as to the real disposition of the people in this period of transition. At any rate, sooner or later, the frail appearance of strength must break down and then the feeling of helplessness would necessarily arouse the longing for a reconciliation with the divine Lord of Life. Then man wants to come into personal contact with the gods; his soul becomes sensible of the problem of sin and righteousness. This religious revolution may have taken place long before the official introduction of Christianity; it may have thrown its shadow upon the last centuries of dying heathenism.

---

[1] Landnámabók 1, 4, 4: Þeir feðgar vildu eigi blóta ok trúðu á mátt sinn.

[2] God, Man and Epic poetry II, p. 67. Van Hamel (Acta Philologica VII p. 265) considers those men as the conservatives who do not yet believe in the assistance of the gods, but in the megin, they are able to actualise in themselves by means of magic. I consider this to be most unlikely, as the belief in personal gods reaches back into so remote periods, that the memory of a period before this development can hardly have lingered on til the beginning of the Viking period.

It does not matter very much if Baldr comes from Thracia or the fettered Loki from the Caucasian peoples. The soil must be prepared where such a seed is sown. If we are aware of the necessity to seek the explanation for the growth of the religious conceptions like those of Baldr and Loki, of the awful consequences of sin and the necessity of redemption, of a final catastrophe and the coming of a new world, not exclusively in foreign influences, we may deem it possible that out of their own religious feeling the Scandinavians were able to arrive at these ideas.

The problem of Loki requires a solution from this point of view. If we accept the possibility of a borrowing from Christian conceptions and Eastern legends, we must first try to answer the question, how it happened that out of numerous possible influences these passed into the Scandinavian religious system. The question may be put also in this way: is it possible to explain the development of Loki into a wicked demon on the basis of his original character? And secondly: are there traces for such a conception in the Old-Norse traditions, independant of the Baldr-myths and the legend about the Ragnarok, that point in the same direction?

3. The family of Loki.

When Snorri in his Skaldskaparmál (ch. 16) asks, how Loki may be called in poetry, the answer is: *svá, at kalla hann son Fárbauta ok Laufeyjar, Nálar, bróðir Býleists ok Helblinda, fǫður Vánargands — þat er Fenrisulfr — ok Jǫrmungandz — þat er Miðgarðzormr — ok Heljar ok Nara ok Ála.*

This is a very rich development of family-relations, where his connections with demoniac beings is most conspicuous. Before trying to settle, what the meaning of these connections may have been, we must first make a distinction between the elements belonging to different ages. We might expect them to be the result of the later development into a kind of devil, traces of which we have occasionely found in the preceding chapters. But in the oldest sources they have already made their appearance.

To begin with the Haustlǫng, composed by Þjóðólfr ór Hvíni in the 9th century; here we read the following kennings for Loki: *Fárbauta mǫgr* (st. 5) and *Ulfs faðir* (st. 8). In the Ynglingatal of the same poet there appear as circumlocutions of Hel: *Loka mær*, *jódís Ulfs ok Narfa* (st.7) and *Býleists bróður mær* (st. 31). Finally in the Húsdrápa of Ulfr Uggason (983) Loki is called *Fárbauta mǫgr* (st. 2) and again *lǫgseims faðir* in the Þórsdrápa of Eilífr Goðrúnarson (about 990 in st. 1).

Hence in skaldic poetry Loki is designated as 1. the son of Fárbauti 2. the brother of Býleistr, 3. the father of Hel, Fenrisulfr, Jǫrmungandr and Narfi. It seems obvious that he is connected with beings, commonly considered as demoniac, for if we are as yet unable to say, who Fárbauti and Býleistr have been, on the other hand the character of the

Fenrisulfr, the world-serpent and the goddess of the underworld is quite clear.

The Eddic poetry adds some new kennings, besides furnishing fresh evidence for those already known. So Loki is called *Býleists bróðir* in the Vǫluspá (st. 51) and Hyndluljóð (st. 40). In the Lokasenna we read *ulfs fǫður* (st. 10) and a new kenning *Laufeyjar sonr* (st. 52), which reappears in the þrymskviða (st. 18). A real catalogue presents the 40th stanza of Hyndluljóð:

> Ól ulf Loki við Angrboðo
> en Sleipni gat við Svaðilfara;
> eitt þótti skass allra feiknast,
> þat var bróður frá Býleists komit.

Finally the Snorra Edda gives, as we have seen, a very complete list of those kennings. We must, however, not suppose that the examples, the learned Icelandic mythographer adduces, are all borrowed from existing poems; he only gives the models for these circumlocutions, and if we do not find *bróðir Helblinda* or *faðir Vánargands* in any known poem, it does not follow that such a poem has ever been known to Snorri[1].

---

[1] Cf. *E. Mogk*, FFComm. N:o 51, p. 11.

We may tabulate the different family-relations of Loki in the following way:

	Skaldic poetry	Eddic poetry	Snorra Edda
son af Fárbauti	Haustlong, Húsdrápa	—	Gylf 32 Skm 16
son of Laufey	—	Lokasenna þrymskviða	Gylf 32 Skm 16
son of Nál	—	—	Gylf 32 Skm 16
brother of Býleistr	Ynglingatal	Vǫluspá Hyndluljóð	Gylf 32 Skm 16
brother of Helblindi	—	—	Gylf 32 Skm 16
husband of Sigyn	Haustlǫng	—	Gylf 32 Skm 16
husband of Angrboða	—	Hyndluljóð	Gylf 33
father of Hel	Ynglingatal	—	Gylf 33 Skm 16
father of Fenrisulfr	Haustlǫng Ynglingatal	Lokasenna	Gylf 33 Skm 16
father of Miðgarðsormr	þórsdrápa	Hymiskviða	Gylf 33 Skm 16
father of Sleipnir	—	Hyndluljóð	Gylf 41
father of Narfi or Nari	Ynglingatal	Lokasenna (prose)	Gylf 32 Skm 16
father of Ali	—	—	Skm 16

In accordance with what might be expected, the Snorra Edda presents a summary of all the examples found both in Eddic and skaldic poetry, only with the exception of three cases, where Snorri is our only authority *viz* for his mother Nál, his brother Helblindi anf his son Ali. The last one assuredly is a mistake, as Ali or Váli is elsewhere the son of Othin; Helblindi is not certain either, as we find it in Grimnismál st. 46 as a name for Othin. Nál may be a synonymous expression for Laufey.

But the other kennings are not equally divided between the skaldic and the Eddic poems. In both we find mention of Býleistr, the Fenrisulfr, the Miðgarðsormr and Narfi. Exclusively Eddic are Laufey, Angrboða and the birth of Sleipnir; only skaldic Fárbauti, Sigyn and Hel. Among these kennings we may distinguish several groups:

1. Those belonging to his punishment: Sigyn, Narfi,
2. Demoniac beings: Angrboða, Hel, Fernrisulfr, Miðgarðsormr,
3. Those showing some connection with Othin: Sleipnir, Ali, Helblindi,
4. Quite unknown names: Fárbauti, Laufey, Nál, Býleistr.

We observe that the ascending line of Loki's family presents a series of names, that are perfectly obscure to us, although etymology has tried to shed some faint light on them. On the contrary the descending line consists of beings, that appear in other myths as well. We might explain the first peculiarity by assuming that these names belong to a very old stage of religions development, whence only obsolete names have come down to us (cf. also the cases of Ullr and Heimdallr); on the other hand it is not less possible, that they are mere inventions of poets and mythographers. The examples of the second kind may help us in determining the character of Loki in these connections.

If we are able to point out a group of these mysterious beings in other connections as well, we might expect to find a more solid base for the distinction of the different elements, that have undoubtedly been mixed up in course of time. The Finnish scholar *E. N. Setälä* has tried to do so in a paper on »Louhi und ihre Verwandten».[1] He studies a Finnish magical song about the origin of diseases, in which we find an old hag, called *Louhi* and *Loviatar* (and with many other slightly diverging names) who has been made pregnant by the wind. Then she gives birth to different beings, not only animals as the wolf, the dog, the serpent[2] but also sons, representing diseases:

Nimitteli poikiahan.
Ruho yksi, rampa toinen,
Kolmansi perisokea[3]

Ruho means »a cripple», *rampa* »a lame man», *perisokea* »quite blind». Now this is according to Setälä a somewhat distorted, but still perfectly clear rendering of the Scandinavian traditions about Loki. He is called the father of the Fenrisulfr and the Jǫrmungandr; the children of Loviatar are a wolf and a serpent. But even more than that: *perisokea* is a clear equivalent of *Helblindi*.[4] Both *Ruho* and *Rampa* may be identified with *Býleistr*, if we accept Setälä's etymology of this name as *billeistr* »who misses a foot». The wind that impregnates Loveatar is then the same as the Fárbauti of skaldic tradition, which means »he who strikes vehemently»; this is, according to Bugge[5] a circumlocution of the stormwind. Furthermore *Laufey* may be compared with *Loveatar* and besides this name we find in variants the word *Aimatar,* which is again the same as the Icelandic Nal, the word *aima* meaning »pine-needle».[1]

---

[1] Finnisch-ugrische Forschungen XII, p. 210—264.

[2] We find even *salon karhu*, *talvikko*, *sisälisko* and *sammakko!*

[3] *K. Krohn*, Suomalaiset Syntyloitsut p. 149.

[4] P. 222: In der Edda-mythologie erscheint ja Helblindi und *perisokea* ist eine so genaue Entsprechung dieses Namens, dass hier unmöglich ein Zufall vorliegen kann; cf. also p. 225—226.

[5] Studier I, p. 76.

The strength of this hypothesis lies mainly in the probability of the proposed etymological explanations. But this is, of course, a very frail base. If, however, the combinations of Setala are acceptable, then the connection between the Finnish magic song and the Loki-myth must lead us to the conclusion that there has existed an original Scandinavian myth, were 1. Laufey had three sons, 2. one of the sons was exceedingly bad and 3. the mother at any rate by means of her son, gives birth to obnoxious animals.[3]

There are, of course, many difficulties to surmount and even many differences to ignore, before we can accept this hypothesis. Kaarle Krohn has seriously weakened it, by pointing out that the words *Aimatar, Alcadtar* and *Naata* can not be combined with *Loveatar?* Still less the children *Ruho, Rampa* and *Perisolcea,* who belong to the magic song of the elfshot; here they occur only in the tradition of the Eastern part of Finland and are obviously a later addition to this magic formula; in the tradition of Nyland and Savolax the three brothers are not quite unknown, but then they belong to other magic songs, f. i. against an abscess. They are, according to Krohn[4], names for the devil in Catholic legends, who is both lame and blind. Bfleistr can not be

---

[1] Other names might be explained in the same way: *Akaatar* by the word *a'as* »prickle» and *Naata* as an inexact rendering of the word *nal.*

[2] L. c. p. 237.

[3] In his Skandinavisk Mytologi p. 161 *K. Krohn* repeats the same opinion. Loveatar belongs, as Setala had already remarked in a previous study to the word *lovi* »ecstasy». *Aimatar* is a combination of *Aijotar* »the daughter of the wicked one» and *Aijon aima* »the needle of the devil».

[4] L. c. p. 162.

brought into relation with the words for lame or cripple, but Helblindi may be, as well as Perisokea, a hypostasis of the devil, who reappears as the blind Hǫðr in the Scandinavian Baldr-myth. To the same representation belongs the blind murderer of Lemminkäinen. Krohn believes that this blind devil ultimately goes back to the blind Longinus, who thrust his spear into the side of Christ.

Axel Olrik has also expressed his doubts about Setälä's theory.[1] The similarities between the Finnish magic song and the traditions about Loki are very slight; if they really do exist they may be explained by an old Scandinavian magic formula, that goes back to a primitive Scandinavian myth about the origin of obnoxious beings. Although Olrik is very careful not to enter into the details of the relation, he feels himself justified to prove by means of this magic song:

1. that the Loke of popular tradition is quite independant from the god of the Edda,
2. that Loki as the representative of the principle of evil is the last stage of the development, because he does not play the principal rôle in this magic song.
3. that the relatives of Loki can not be divided into two groups, one of the principle of evil and another of cosmic phenomena, because the Finnish formula shows that the wind is his father.

It is rather strange, that Olrik who concedes that the connection between the Finnish and Scandinavian traditions is exceedingly insignificant, still makes use of it to prove that his own theory about the meaning of Loki is reinforced by it; only the overestimation of popular lore can account for the importance he attributes to the magical song about Loveatar and Perisokea.

---

[1] Lukki og Loviatar i finske trylleformler in Danske Studier 1912 p. 95 sqq.

I am unable to follow Olrik along this way. The late **M.** Cahen was also of the opinion, that there is no relation whatever between the Finnish magic formula and the myth of Loki[1]. I am no less convinced of the necessity to refrain from far-reaching conclusions about hypothetical primitive myths on the basis of traditions, that show not only a different character, but belong also to different times and places, and that can, moreover, only be brought into relation with each other by means of wild etymologies and doubtful reinterpretations.

We must try to disentangle the Icelandic traditions. Such a rich and varied collection of relatives is only conceivable as the result of a long development. How did it take this shape? Let us begin with Loki's brothers; they are called Helblindi and Býleistr. If we explain the former name as »the quite blind one» (*hel* being a weakly stressed form of *heil*) or as »the blind one belonging to hell», in both cases we can easily believe that it must denote a demoniac being. As *Mogk* expresses it[2] »wohl erst auf Island ist ihm (i.e. Loki) ein Bruder Helblindi geworden, die personifizierte Finsternis unter der Erde, die noch jetzt jeden unheimlich ankommt, der ohne Licht in den Lavahöhlen Islands weilt». The same name however, is according to st. 46 of Grímnismál an epithet of Othin and if Falk's explanation of the word[3] as a mistake for *Herblindi* is not quite satisfactory, the fact itself remains unshaken, that Helblindi in a very trustworthy tradition denoted Othin. Did it ever signify anything else? There is not the slightest shadow of proof for it, as our only source is the Snorra Edda, where we merely get the information, that Helblindi and Býleistr are the brothers of Loki. Obviously, this does not imply that they are demons.

---

[1] Revue de l'histoire des religions XCII (1925) p. 65—66.

[2] Hoops' Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde III, p. 165.

[3] Odensheite in Skrifter Vid. Selsk. i Oslo 1924 No. 10 p. 16.

About the name Býleistr many etymologies have been proposed. Some scholars have explained the word as an adaptation of a foreign word, such as Belzebub [1] or Belit.[2] Others have brought it into connection with the lightning, most commonly taking the second syllable *-leistr* in the sense of *leiptr*.[3] We have already mentioned Setälä's opinion. Finally Olrik translates the word as »the stormfooted» [4] and F. Jónsson says in a slightly different way [5]: »who goes over the fields». And it is gain Olrik, who clearly draws the necessary conclusion: Býleistr is a name for Othin, the swiftfeeted god of the stormwind. There is no single place in the Old-Norse literature, that may be opposed to this explanation; the name is exclusively found in the fossilized construction *Byleists bróðir* for Loki. I think there is nothing more probable than that Loki is considered to be the brother of Othin, when he is called the brother of Helblindi and Býleistr. If it is said, that people could readily arrive at the conclusion, that Helblindi and Býleistr were two new gods [6]; we are obliged to add, that this people were modern scholars, for in the Old-Norse tradition there is nothing that points in this direction. If we remember the well-known line of the Lokasenna, where Loki speaks about Othin being his »bloodbrother», we are once more convinced that this was the original conception, underlying also the kennings *Býleists* and *Helblinda bróðir*.

---

[1] *S. Bugge*, Studier I, p. 72 and *Golther*, Germanische Mythologie p. 411 with some hesitation.

[2] *K. Krohn*, Skandinavisk mytologi p. 162.

[3] *Wadstein*, Arkiv f. nord. Filologi XI, p. 77; *Mogk*, Grundriss III^2, p. 348; *Herrmann*, Nordische Mythologie p. 406; *E. H. Meyer*, Germanische Mythologie p. 276. Vǫluspá st. 51 has *Byleipts.*

[4] Festskrift Feilberg p. 565.

[5] Goðafræði p. 97: sá sem fer yfir byggðir.

[6] Miss Gras l.c. p. 113.

In the old skaldic tradition Loki is the son of Fárbauti, the brother of Býleistr, the husband of Sigyn. Moreover he is the father of Hel, the Fenrisulfr and the Jǫrmungandr; also of Narfi or Nari. About Fárbauti we know nothing; the name is explained as »the oarsman»[1], »the storm»[2], »the lightning»[3] or even »the demon that sends the elfshot».[4] I take it with Olrik[5], that Bugge's conception is most plausible, without being assured, that it renders the original meaning. At any rate the son of Fárbauti, the brother of Othin and the husband of Sigyn is not necessarily a malicious demon. In this sense he may be explained as the father of such beings as Hel, the Fenrisulfr and the world-serpent. But we must be careful not to admit too readily the later conceptions of these beings, which are manifestly unfavourable. The Jǫrmungandr is, after all, part of the cosmic system; this serpent upholds the world, as long as it lies coiled round the horizon. Hence it is not exclusively demoniac; only when it leaves its place and rushes towards the abode of the gods, is it taken as an obnoxious demon. But this belongs to the story of the Ragnarǫk and may not be placed on the same level as the religious conceptions of older times. The tale of Thor's fishing up the world-serpent is a well-known legend about a sea-monster, probably influenced by Christian ideas; if the poet of the Hymiskviða calls it the *umgiǫrð allra landa*, he makes in my opinion a quite arbitrary identification.

If Othin is a god of the dead, it is but natural that Loki is nearly related to Hel. The conception, that he is the father of the Fenrisulfr may belong to the same religious sphere. I do not intend to enter into the details of the problem of Fenrir; it is almost certain that foreign, and notably Christian influence is traceable in the development of this demoniac being.[1] But this influence has been exerted very early, for in the end of the 10th century we find already the characteristic traits of Fenrir. Its frightful appearance in the general upheaval of the world is most vividly depicted in the Eiriksmál, where we read in st. 7 (according to J. Sahlgren's emendation[2]):

---

[1] *Wisén*, Odin och Loke p. 65.

[2] *S. Bugge*, Studier I, p. 76.

[3] *Axel Kock*, Indogerm. Forschungen X, p. 101.

[4] *Celander*, Lokes mytiska ursprung p. 125 note.

[5] Festskrift Feilberg p. 566.

> þviat óvíst 's at vita
> nǿr ulfr enn hǫsvi
> sœkir á sjǫt goða.

In his Hákonarmál the last Norwegian poet Eyvindr skáldaspillir has imitated the Eiríksmál; the same idea of the wolf Fenrir is used by him to denote an impossibility (st. 20): *mun óbundinn á ýta sjǫt fenrisulfr fara áðr jafngóðr á auða trǫð konungmaðr komi.* In one of his lausavísur (st. 6), written at about the same time as the Hákonarmál (961—962) he makes an allusion to the *gómsparri* of the wolf, by using as a kenning for sword: *Fenris varra sparri.*[3] Although the poet tries to represent king Hákon as a protector of the heathen religion, who was received after his death in Walhal by Othin himself[4], he may have been under the influence of his lord, who had received a Christian education. But this can not account for these allusions in his poems, because they presuppose a myth known to everybody and not a new-fangled tradition. Hence as early as 961 the figure of Fenrir is fully developed: he has been bound by the gods and he will be freed when Ragnarǫk draws near. It seems possible to me, that Fenrir originally is a demoniac being, expressing the idea of death; its connection with Othin is not impossible as this god is accompanied by the wolves Geri and Freki. It needs no further proof, that this idea may be exceedingly old; we find f.i. the same idea in the Atharva Veda, where is said in prayer (II, 29, 6): Protect us, o gods, that the wolf may not devour us.[1] If Krappe is right in his suggestion that the myth of Týr's hand being bitten off by Fenrir goes ultimately back to Gallic sculptures representing an animal devouring a human being or at least one of its limbs [2], this conception must be as old as the beginning of our era. This, however, is by no means certain. At any rate, we are entitled to consider a good part of the traditions about Fenrir, as belonging to the heathen period and being the result of genuine Scandinavian development.[3] In our oldest sources Loki is nearly related to such a demon of death.

---

[1] See *K. Krohn*, Finnisch-ugrische Forschungen VII, p. 156—161 and *Hj. Falk* in Sproglige og Historiske afhandlinger viede Sophus Bugges minde, p. 139—144.

[2] Eddica et Scaldica I, p. 11.

[3] *F. Jónsson*, Skjaldedigtning B I, p. 63.

[4] *F. Jónsson*, Den oldnorske og oldislandske Litteraturshistorie I² p. 451.

We arrive at the conclusion that Loki, according to the oldest kennings is closely connected with Othin and at the same time with several demoniac beings belonging to the realm of death. Here, of course, there is no contradiction. But we get the impression that in course of time, Othin and Loki developed in two opposite directions, Othin becoming one of the chief gods, Loki on the contrary remaining in close connection with a couple of demons. This may be the reason, why he stays on a level between the gods and the demons, and it is only natural that under the influence of the Christian ideas about the devil and his realm, he was very easily identified with Satan and consequently debased to a relentless foe of the gods.

---

[1] *Oldenberg*, Die Religion des Veda p. 539.

[2] Études de mythologie et de folklore germaniques p. 11—27.

[3] That is why I can not accept the etymology of Fenrisulfr as *fen-hrís-ulfr* (*S. N. Hagen* in Maal og Minne 1910 p. 57—59), because this explanation starts from the idea that Fenrir is a Scandinavian development of Behemoth, which according to Hiob lies hidden in rushes and watery places.

Narfi belongs to the same group of death-demons. The kenning for Hel *jódís Ulfs ok Narfa* proves that the wolf and Narfi are closely related beings. If we may explain this name with *S. Bugge*[1] as »the narrow one», it seems to be a very appropriate designation of a being belonging to the realm of death.[2] About Laufey and Nál nothing can be said with any certainty; the last word may be a skaldic invention as a counterpart of Laufey. This name, however, is not less the product of later tradition, as we find it only in such recent poems as the Lokasenna and the Þrymskviða. It means literally: »the island with foliage-trees», but has this anything to do with Farbauti, who if he is lightning strikes the trees, or, if he is storm, may uproot them? The line of Hyndluljóð st. 48 *ól ulf Loki við Angrboðo* belongs to a not less recent period, when mythographers invented all kinds of allegorical beings to fill the gaps of tradition.

4. The devilish Loki

If we do not accept any longer that Loki is only an abridged form of Lucifer[3], we are no less convinced than the scholars of the mythological school of *Bugge* and *E. H. Meyer*, that the Christian devil has exerted a great influence upon the later development of the Scandinavian Loki. It is already sufficient to look at the circumlocutions, mentioned by Snorri in his Gylfaginning ch. 32, to become aware of the great distance between this Loki and the god of the Þjazi-myth. Snorri calls him *rógberi ásanna*, *frumkveði flærðanna* and *vamm allra goða ok manna.* But since we do not find these kennings in any skaldic or Eddic poem, we may safely conclude, that Snorri has coined them himself.

---

[1] Helgedigtene p. 96—97.

[2] It is also connected with the idea of night; according to the Gylfaginning the father of Nótt was called Nǫrvi or Narfi.

[3] *S. Bugge*, Studier I, p. 70.

But they prove the rather unfriendly feeling of later Icelandic tradition towards Loki. His relationship with several dangerous demons as Fenrir and the worldserpent, his flyting of the gods, his heinous treachery against Baldr, his place among the demons in the Ragnarǫk, they all point in the same direction. It is, however, quite unnecessary to insist upon this side of Loki, because it has been done several times before.[1] But I wish to repeat the words, I have said in a previous chapter, that the influence of Caucasian legends about a fettered demon is in many respects still obscure and by no means beyond all doubt, whilst the Christian legends are introduced first in the time of the disintegration of the heathen belief. Hence an important part of the development of Loki must belong to the pagan period itself. If as early as 961 Fenrir is the fettered demon of Ragnarǫk and at the same date Loki is called his father, we may conclude with a fair amount of certainty, that the germs of this development reach back to a period several centuries earlier. The drawback of those theories, which accept in a large measure the influence of Oriental and Christian religious representations, lies in the danger that we are too readily inclined to neglect the elements lying in the heathen religious conceptions themselves. Loki could never have adopted the character of Satan, if he had not been predisposed to it. This predisposition is, however, of the utmost importance to him who tries to solve the problem of Loki. For this god is not a kind of mosaic, where all kinds of variegated stones have been fitted together into a fanciful pattern, but he must be understood, as every other religious conception, by a natural growth from more primitive conceptions according to tendencies lying hidden in these selfsame original representations.

---

[1] F.i. by *Bugge*, *E. H. Meyer*, *Golther*, *A. Olrik*, *K. Krohn*, to mention only the best names among many others.

CHAPTER X

THE CHARACTER OF LOKI

1. Loki's relation to the gods

F. Jónsson has once given the following explanation of Loki[1]: »He wished to do damage to the gods and to mankind as a revenge for the death of Ymir and for all the giants had had to suffer. This is best proved by his name: he is the being who makes an end to everything (*hann er sá sem lýkur öllu*). Then all becomes quite clear. Loki belongs to the family of the giants. He even contrived by his cunning to seduce Othin to a fóstbræðralag. By his handsome appearance he succeeded in winning the love the goddesses. He is, in one word, the personification of all that is bad and wicked.»

The famous Icelandic scolar is obviously disinclined to regard Loki as the result of historical development. He takes him according to the descriptions, afforded by the sources. Here the evil nature of this god is strongly emphasized. Hence this must be his real character. All his deeds must be judged from this standpoint. That is why the blood-brothership with Othin is explained unfavourably: Othin has been the victim of a trick, played on him by Loki. When he accompanies Thor, it is only to show him the way of perdition. Even the Þrymskviða has to serve as a proof for this contention: the poet has no longer understood, that Loki was the actual thief of the hammer, but that this must have been the original idea is shown by the Esthonian folktale about the instrument of the thundergod.

---

[1] Goðafræði Norðmanna og Islendinga p. 96.

The reader will not want a refutation of this very simple theory; all the previous chapters bring sufficiant evidence, that it could not be true. Still the fundamental idea of F. Jónsson is not altogether wrong: he has tried to find a conception of Loki by which all the myths about him could be explained, without having recourse to different stages of development or the coalescence of several originally independant beings. It is, however, a mistake to begin from the unfavourable conception of Loki, as we find expressed in the later sources. If we are unwilling to reconstruct a history of this religious conception, we are not allowed to close our eyes to the undeniable contradictions of his character, as is described by the literary documents of different ages.

I wish to repeat shortly the result of our investigation: Loki is the faithful companion of Thor, subordinate to this god, even often helping him by his clever counsels. According to the Lokasenna he has in former times sworn bloodbrothership with Othin and there is no reason whatever to suspect him of any bad intentions. In the myth of Þjazi he is, together with Othin and Hœnir, exposed to the malignity of the giant-bird.

This is one side of his character. But directly opposite are the numerous tales, where he is the unrelenting foe of the gods, making mischief when he sees a proper occasion, planning even the final destruction of the gods. I am of opinion, that Christian influence has largely contributed to the development of the unfavourable character of this god, especially because it is found most prominently in later traditions. But this does not imply of course, that the Loki of heathen religion has been wholly exempt from such demoniac elements; quite to the contrary, it would be unintelligible, if he had been taken as a prototype of Satan, when there had been no germs for such a development. But we must be careful of introducing our ethical ideas into a conception, that possibly was not at all concerned with the ideas of good or bad. As I have said before, his double character must be understood from the point of view, that he belonged to the gods as well as to the demons, that he by his own character stood on the border of these opposite supernatural worlds. Gods themselves are not always of a consistent character; they may be the protectors of mankind and the defenders of the cosmic order and still there may be occasions, where they show themselves of an irascible nature, even inclined to play abominable tricks or to perform atrocious injustices. We do not enter into the religious feelings of the heathen believers and consequently all the traditions lie on the same level and they are to be judged by the same measure of critical understanding. But in real belief it is always quite different. Even for the Christians the Lord is one time the God of love and pity, at the other time the God of revenge and wrath. It is of no importance, that we may distinguish these diverging characters by an opposition of conceptions belonging to the Old and the New Testament, for in the mind of the believer they are both present at the same time. According to special circumstances and especially to the actual state of mind, the one conception may predominate or the other. Hence they will only very seldom come into collision with each other. But the man, who stands outside, and who reads the traditions, emanating from these different conceptions, in the same unaffected state of mind, is liable to the error, that here two irreconcilable ideas are present at the same time, and that they must be the consequences of totally different origins.

Of course, I do not pretend, that Loki ever belonged to the domain of real *belief*. There are at any rate no indications whatever of a cult, of which he has been the centre; we never hear of any sacrifices made to him nor are there place-names, preserving the recollection of heathen veneration of Loki. But this a question of minor importance. There are more gods in the same condition as he: Heimdallr, Hœnir and several female divinities. It would be a rather rash conclusion to say that they also had never received any veneration or worship. A god without a cult is only an abstraction, nothing else but an invention of mythological literature. Such may be the case of Dagr and Nótt, Forseti or Fjǫrgynn, but it will not be easily accepted in the case of divinities, that play such a preponderant rôle in the heathen traditions as Heimdallr and Loki. The cult may have been of a special kind; only belonging to private affairs, or exerted under special circumstances; it may also have been subordinated to the worship of a more prominent deity. Here all guess-work is superfluous. Hence I do not wish to stress this side of the problem. But I am strongly convinced that a supernatural being such as Loki may have had originally an ambiguous character and that it is by such a character that the diversity of his rôles in the extant literature can be best explained.

2. Loki's relation to natural phenomena

The connection of Loki and fire has been for a long time one of the most certain conclusions of students in the field of Scandinavian mythology. I had the opportunity to discuss this opinion in ch. VIII; here I wish to give some few additions. I may adduce as a curious example the interpretation given by *E. Mogk* in the Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde[1] because we find here the full array or arguments. Mogk mentions the following points:

---

[1] Vol. III, p. 162 sqq.

1. Originally he is a fire-elf (Feueralf) and as such quite independant. As an elf he was connected with Othin, as a fire-demon with Thor.
2. Because flame is thought of in some connection with the spirits, the purely natural phenomenon developed into a spiritual being, i.e. an *alf.*
3. Etymology supports this view: Loki is the same word as *logi;* Fárbauti means »he who creates damage (or fire) by striking»; Laufey or »island of leaf-trees» means the object, from which fire emanates. Both names are a reminiscence of the practice of the fire-drill.
4. Loki is a kind of culture-hero who procures fire for mankind, as is shown by the Brísingamen-myth.
5. Loki is a god of lightning, *viz.* Býleiptr which means »Donnerblitz», Sigyn that is »the rain-cloud», Loptr or »the lightning» and Nari a personification of the cold winter.

It is hardly necessary to show the frailty of this hypothetical construction. It is built exclusively on the theory of Olrik about Loki's nature as an *ildvætte.* We will have to discuss it presently in our chapter XI. As I have often said, etymology is utterly worthless; if we want to maintain an other explanation of Loki, the different names will lend themselves to it as well. The conception of Sigyn as the raincloud or Býleiptr as the »Donnerblitz» is a curious survival of old mythological theories, that explained almost every divinity as the religious equivalent of a natural phenomenon. The highly constructive character of this theory is shown clearly by the explanation of Loki's relation to Othin as well as to Thor. A fire-alf means both the element of fire and an elfish being; that is said to be the reason that Loki became attached to the thundergod and to the Lord of the Asir. But how this came to be, is left in enigmatical darkness and it appears to me, that this should be of particular interest. Not every elfish being had the brilliant success of Loki, who became even the fóstbroðir of Othin. Was it only on account of his elfish character? I am not prepared to accept it without any further proof, because it is by no means a development, implied in the original character itself of a fire-elf. Here is the salient point: if we can not explain the transition from one sphere into an other, of a simpler fire-spirit into the full-blown companion of the supreme gods Othin and Thor, then the theory is absolutely unacceptable.

Are there indeed in the mythological traditions themselves any indications of Loki's fire-nature? No conclusive ones, at any rate. The salmon-shape of Loki can not be explained as a proof of it, because, as we have seen, there is no reason, to explain the salmon as a fire-fish. If Loki should be demonstrated as a fire-demon, on the basis of indisputable facts, then we might conclude that the salmon perhaps had some connection with a myth about the origin of fire. It would not be positively established, for the salmon-shape might have had an other meaning as well or even no particular meaning at all, particularly in such a literary tale as is the capture of Loki. But, certainly, some amount of probability for this opinion could be accepted. It is, however, an example of poor method, to accept the fire-nature of the salmon, solely relying upon the fact that in mythological traditions of other peoples a spark of fire may be concealed in a fish, and then to conclude, that Loki who once took the shape of a salmon, must have been a fire-demon too.

There is one place in the Old-Norse literature, I have hitherto left out of discussion. At the end of the Lokasenna it is said, that Loki disappears from Ægir's hall after having pronounced the following threat:

eiga þín ǫll er hér inni er
leiki yfir logi
ok brenni þér á baki!

Several scholars have contended, that it is clearly expressed here, that Loki has power over the element of fire.[1] For if he had been f.i. a waterdemon, he assuredly would have said, that he would destroy the gods by drowning together with Ægir's hall. After all this is a very superficial conclusion. *Celander* has shown by the analogy of several folktales, that a malevolent being may punish by setting a house on fire.[2] Of course, he explains Loki's words as a proof of his opinion, that Loki is originally a *vætte*, an elfish being. Olrik gives his assention to Celander's folkloristic parallels, but explains the words of Loki as a prediction of the Ragnarǫk, that presently will destroy the world by fire.[3]

Perhaps the explanation is still more simple. Loki is in the hall of the sea-god; if he wishes to destroy it, he can not do it by means of water, for this will not make any impression upon the lord of the ocean. So he must take the element, opposite to Ægir's nature, *viz.* fire. But the author of Lokasenna has certainly felt a connection between the names of Loki and the word for fire; it is a kind of pun, when he says in his last words to the assembled gods: *leikr yfir logi*. But this is not a connection of originally equivalent ideas, but only a question of popular etymology. Here we find the same case as in the myth of Thor's journey to Utgarðaloki, where Loki and Logi are described as opponents. I may refer the reader to my discussion of this tale in ch. V, 3. It is a very self-evident result of the highly intellectual activity of the Icelandic mythographers, who treated the old religious lore as a purely literary tradition and were not at all adverse to allegorical interpretations. No one can deny the fact, that Loki actually in a certain period of Old-Norse tradition, has been connected with the idea of *logi*, but there are, as far as I see, no proofs whatever that the original meaning of Loki has anything in common with fire.[1]

---

[1] F.e. *Wisén*, Oden och Loke p. 69; *A. Kock*, Indogerm. Forschungen X, p. 90 sqq.; *Herrmann*, Nordische Mythologie p. 409; *E. H. Meyer*, Germanische Mythologie p. 278.

[2] L.c. p. 78—80.

[3] Festskrift Feilberg p. 567 note 2; cf. also *Gering-Sijmons*, Edda Kommentar ad Lokasenna 65.

Then why not try the element of water? In my second chapter I have mentioned the view of Wisén, who indeed accepted Loki as being connected with this element and who adduced as an argument in its favor an etymology of Fenrir. *Axel Olrik* has collected all the material, that could point in this direction and he draws our attention to the following facts: 1. the Andvari-tale, where Loki kills an otter and catches the pike in the waterfall; 2. the invention of the fishing-net; 3. his salmon-shape to escape from the persecuting gods; 4. his seal-shape in the fight with Heimdall; 5. the Faroese folktale where he is lord of the fishes.[1] Still Olrik does not venture to draw the conclusion, that Loki could have been a water-god too and this is, indeed, the only possible view. After the treatment of the myths and of the Faroese folktale, where Loki may seem to have some aquatic proclivities, in our preceding chapters, it can not but be evident, that they are quite too shaky a foundation to build such a theory on it. Loki is no more a god of the water because he takes the shape of a fish, than he is a god of the air on account of his flying in Freyja's feather-apparel or of his being occasionally an insect. It is of no importance whatever, if the Flemish spirit Kludde also shows several traits, that may be explained as indications of a special connection with water; Miss Gras [2], who stresses this argument, forgets that the basis of the identification of Loki and Lodder-Kludde is only the alleged etymological correspondance of the words Lodder and Lóðurr, and that in the image of the latter, as we know from Scandinavian tradition, no single trait points to the element of water. Moreover, if we could indeed assume, on account of a couple of clear and incontestable examples, that Loki in some cases had the character of a water-god, it would be impossible to explain his complicated personality from this standpoint alone and we should be obliged to seek for other original traits, by which the remaining myths — and to be sure the majority of them — could be understood.

---

[1] As an amusing example of learned explanations about Loki without any real foundation in the actual traditions, I wish to quote the following sentences from *L. von Schroeder*, Mysterium und Mimus im Rigveda p. 219: »Loki ist das Feuer im Ofen, ganz elementar und dämonisch gefasst, das Feuer als gefährliches Element, das man hüten und besänftigen muss. Loki ist auch die Sonne, sofern sie glüht und brennt, durch ihre Hitze versengt, Wasser zieht und Dünste entwickelt — kurzum die Sonne von ihrer elementaren Seite genommen, insbesondere auch sofern sie quält und lästig wird, Vegetation und Menschen schädigt. Das Brísingamen dagegen ist die Sonne, sofern sie als herrliches Kleinod der himmlischen Göttin da droben strahlt, Götter und Menschen durch ihre hehre Schönheit entzückt; und es ist zugleich das Feuer, wie es beim Sonnwendfest lodert, das Feuer, sofern es als hehres und heiliges Symbol die Sonne darstellt, die Sonne grüsst und in ihrem Aufstieg stärkt. Darum steht in gewisser Weise das Brísingamen den heiligen Göttern Agni und Apollon seinem Wesen nach näher als der türkische schadenfrohe Loki.» It will hardly be necessary to criticize these nicely constructed sentences, where only the words »hehr» and »heilig» are somewhat too frequently used. The fire on the hearth is, to begin with, not demoniac and not dangerous, but on the contrary a benefit to mankind. And what on earth Loki might have in common with a fiercely burning sun (perhaps a kind of demon meridianus?) is to me quite unintelligible.

---

[1] Festskrift Feilberg p. 569.

[2] L.c. p. 123.

Gods, that represent a definite part of nature, are now-a-days not hailed with such confidence as a quarter of a century ago. We have come to the insight, that in the framing of the supernatural world man wanted to create a transcendental correspondence to his own needs and his own interests. Gods are not the result of the contemplation of the universe, but of the keen desire to have companions and helpers of a higher order in the troubles and labors of earthly life. As far as this life is dependant upon nature and the manifestation of its forces, representations of this kind may enter into religious conceptions. If people do believe in a fire-god, it is only because the necessity and the usefulness of fire has in all ages been present in the mind of the worshipper. It was the act of making fire, the means to use and to control it, the danger emanating from it, that compelled mankind to subject himself to rules and actions, that might have the desired effect. But his attitude towards fire, although eminently practical as to its purpose, was of course quite intermingled with magical practices and religious conceptions. This makes it often extremely difficult, especially in a religion that has become more or less sophisticated, to distinguish between a belief in fire as a natural element and the religious attitude towards one of the most valuable necessities of human life. Fire, however, is in most cases not a subject, but purely an object. It must be acquired, and when it is kindled on the hearth it must be treated with the utmost care. Fire in itself is not a divinity, but it might be easily conceived of as having a divine origin.

3. Loki's relation to the underworld

In his paper on the Teutonic heaven-god, *R. Much*[1] considers the evidence of the etymology of Loki's name as belonging to the verb *lúkan* »to close» and thinks it possible that this word, to which ags *loca* »prison» belongs, might have originally denoted a subterranean place of punishment, being a distinct part of the realm of death; Loki might have developed into its ruler as the first and most important of those who had been hurled into it. This Loki is of course only Lucifer in Scandinavian disguise; if Much contends, that this could have taken place by »an independant development of the Teutonic myth», it is not easy to follow his idea and it does not alter the fact, that such a Loki is a foreign element in the religious system of the Scandinavians.

---

[1] Der germanische Himmelsgott p. 57.

Indications for the chthonic character of Loki, although very scarce, are not wanting. In the Fjǫlsvinnsmál the weapon by which the wondrous bird *Viðofnir* may be killed is called *Lævateinn*, and in st. 26 it is said:

Lævateinn hann heitir   en hann gørði Loptr rúnom
fyr nágrindr neðan;
í Sægiarns keri   liggr hann hiá Sinmǫro
ok halda niarðlásar níó.

There are nearly as many riddles in this stanza as there are proper names; we do not know the meaning of the Lævateinn, nor of Sinmara and the box of Sægiarn. They may be poetical embellishments of later ages. But it is clear, that Loptr did make this fearful weapon, that he did it by means of magical runes, while he was within the enclosure of the Underworld. It is, perhaps, not surprising that Loptr or Loki is supposed to be in the realm of death, but it is, on the contrary, a rather unexpected statement that he forges a weapon and makes use of runes. *Celander* is right, when he says that this tallies excellently with the character of an elfish being, although it does not follow that it proves Loki's character as such.[1] Loptr is conceived of as a dwarf in this stanza and we may even say that the poet of this part of the Svipdagsmál indeed had this view of the god, for in st. 34 he mentions Loki as the builder of the palace of Menglǫð together with incontestably dwarfish beings such as Dellingr, Óri and Varr.[1] So we may ask if this represents an original tradition; a line as e.g. *Uni ok Íri, Óri ok Bari* makes the impression of a soundplay, void of any particular mythological meaning. Such lists of names as we find them in the Snorra Edda contain only partly genuine material of old lore; the inventive mind of poets and mythographers has surely added much to them. Loki, of whom the Sǫrlaþáttr says that he was *ekki mikill vǫxtum* has been brought into connection with elfish beings, although he does not originally belong to them. But he was a clever spirit, prone to mischief and *vélræði;* he stood in opposition to the gods as well as to the giants; this may have been sufficient to compare him with dwarfs and other elfish beings. The characteristic of the Sǫrlaþáttr may be considered as the result of this later development and it is at any rate no proof for the high antiquity of this conception. But it lay ready to hand; if we only think of the slow-witted Thor with his huge body and tremendous force we can easily understand that the shrewd Loki, who was in every way the opposite of the thundergod, was represented as a great intellect in a nimble body.

---

[1] L.c. p. 126.

The stanza of the Fjǫlsvinnsmál does not yield such strong evidence for Loki's character as a death-demon, as *Schoning*[2] would have us believe. Its content is highly suspicious, and moreover, as *v. Sydow* objected in his paper on the giants[3], the poem says only that Loki made this weapon on this subterranean spot, but not that he was in the habit of living there. Loptr is said to have done this *fyr nágrindr neðan*, because this would aptly give us the impression of something very horrible and terrifying.

---

[1] These names are found in the Vǫluspá and the þulur of the Snorra Edda.

[2] Dødsriger i nordisk hedentro p. 40.

[3] Jättarna p. 16.

The same may be said about stanza 23 of the Lokasenna, where Othin says to Loki:

átta vetr vartu fyr iǫrð neðan,
kýr mólkandi ok kona.

For if we accept this as being an allusion to a genuine myth, then we know nothing more about it than this couple of lines and we are unable to determine the character of Loki, when he, as a woman, has been milking cows[1] in the underworld. In this case he can hardly have been considered as a chthonic being, but he committed an infamous act by taking the shape of a woman and doing the work of a milkmaid. Was it on this account that he hid himself under the earth?

It is, however, not to be denied, that heathen mythology has felt a connection between Loki and the world of the Dead. We have already seen that Hel is called his daughter and this is only possible if he was considered to be a chthonic being. Perhaps the same may be said on account of *Utgarðaloki*, that is, the Loki belonging to Utgarð, »the world outside the regions inhabited by man». But it is not clear what the exact relation between Loki and Utgarðaloki may have been. There are several possibilities. Utgarðaloki may be an invention of later times and his name may point at an opposition to the real Loki. Utgarðaloki belongs to the world of trolls and monsters, not to the realm of death. Finally Loki may be a shortened form of Utgarðaloki, and so have been originally identical. It seems difficult to me to choose between these conceptions without making a quite arbitrary decision. I am inclined to consider Utgarðaloki as the name of Loki in his special function of lord of the demoniac world, but at the same time I am convinced of this being the result of a later development under the influence of Christian ideas about hell as a place of punishment and torture. The Old Teutonic belief had apparently other ideas about it and the goddess Hel herself is only a personification of the subterranean cave, where the dead came together when they had to *troða helveg.*

---

[1] I accept the explanation of *kýr mólkandi* as »milking cows» and not as »a milkgiving cow» (cf. *Gering-Sijmons*, Edda-Commentar I, p. 288), in the same way as we find in the first lay of Helgi Hundingsbani st. 43: þá er þú Gullnis geitr mólkaðir (cf. *E. A. Kock*, NN § 10).

From all this it is obvious, that in the conception of Loki there must have been elements that could lead to such a development. His intimate relation to Othin, as it is expressed by their *fóstbræðralag*, may be explained by the supposition, that they both belonged to the underworld. But then we can not follow the argument of Hilding Celander, who considers the connection of Loki and Hel as a consequence of his being a spirit, which the Old-Norse sources usually call *alf.* Here again the modern representations in popular lore are confused with the heathen conceptions; the alf in Old-Norse sources is not the teasing spirit of modern folk-tales, nor the wily smith of mediaeval romance, but a spirit of the dead intimately connected with the fertilizing forces at work in the bowels of the earth.[1] It is a far cry from a benevolent halfgod like Óláfr Geirstaðaálfr or Bárðr Snæfellsáss to a trickster as Loki appears to have been even in the oldest sources.

We arrive at a conclusion, that is only provisional. There is no reason to deny the possibility of Loki's connection with the world of the dead, but the meagre evidence we can gather from Scandinavian literature does not allow us to make out of what character this relation has been.

---

[1] Cf. my paper »Van Alven en Elfen» in the (Dutch) Tijdschrift voor Volkskunde XXXVI (1931) p. 3—30.

4. Loki's bisexual character

In the stanza of Lokasenna quoted in the previous paragraph we find two more lines, that however have been rejected as a later addition by several scholars. They are:

ok hefir þú þar bǫrn borit
ok hugða ek þat args aðal.

It may be, that these lines do not originally belong to the poem, but their contents are quite in accordance with the opinion of the author of the Lokasenna, for in st. 33 Njǫrðr repeats the same insult to Loki:

hitt er undr, er áss ragr er hér inn of kominn
ok hefir sá bǫrn of borit.

The outrageous insult of *ergi* is furthermore borne out by the myth of Sleipnir's birth, as it is told in the story of the giant-builder. Also the Hyndluljóð says in st. 40: *en Sleipni gat við Svaðilfara.* A dim recollection of this myth is still preserved in the Faroese popular tradition according to which Loki himself avowed that he underwent different transformations, but that the worst experience, he ever had, had been, when he as a mare was pregnant by Grani.[1]

It is of importance that the same is related about Othin. Loki answers him in st. 24 of the Lokasenna by throwing back at him the same outrage:

En þik síða kóðo Samseyjo í
ok draptu á vétt sem vǫlur
vitka líki fórtu verþióð yfir
ok hugða ek þat args aðal.

Othin visiting the people in the shape of a witch and performing ignominious sorcery is scarcely any better than Loki and perhaps we had better listen to the advice of Frigg, who says in the following stanza:

---

[1] *H. C. Lyngbye*, Færøiske Qvæder om Sigurd Fofnersbane og hans æt (*Randers* 1822) p. 21 note; communication of Pastor Schrøter.

ørlǫgom ykkrom skylit aldregi
segia seggiom frá,
hvat it æsir tveir drýgðoð í árdaga;
firriz æ forn rǫk firar.

But it goes without saying that these motives are too important to pass over in silence. The transformation of these gods into women is an undeniable fact and in itself it seems not to be incompatible with the respect due to a deity, as Othin himself is not exempt from this evil. Still it is not a deed, that brings much honour to a man and as soon as there is any tendency to suspect a god of heinous crimes, such a tradition is apt to be explained in malam partem.

As *Axel Olrik* already pointed out [1], the most important among these myths, the tale about the birth of Sleipnir, does not necessarily present Loki as a wicked god, for he is here the shrewd deceiver of the troll. But as I have tried to prove, this myth may have been originally quite independant from the tale of the giant-builder and so we have only to reckon with the bare fact, that there has been a myth, where it was related, that Loki had given birth to Sleipnir and that its father was called Svaðilfari. Whether, however, this myth can claim to be originally heathen, is open to serious doubt.[2] *Kaarle Krohn* is inclined [3] to admit Christian influence, and he draws our attention to a Finnish tale about Lemminkäinen, who treats a blind person with contempt, because he has had illicit intercourse with a mare, and to the popular belief, that the horse is closely connected with the devil. But these parallels are in themselves not enough to prove, that the Sleipnir-myth must be an adaptation of a Christian legend. The abundance of proper names does not prove the contrary, because later mythographers are very liberal in inventing them. But if Sleipnir as the horse of Othin originally means the death-horse, it is by no means incredible that a myth has existed about its birth and then we are not entitled to exclude the probability, that Loki has played a rôle in it. Together with the other examples of his *ergi*, the myth of the birth of Sleipnir may contain a germ of truth about Loki's character, which may be useful for our investigation.

---

[1] Festskrift Feilberg p. 559.

[2] *F. Jónsson*, Goðafræði p. 91 calls it of later origin.

[3] Übersicht über einige Resultate der Märchenforschung, FF-Comm. No. 96, p. 120—121.

We may finally add a few other stories about the female nature of Loki. In the myth of Baldr he acts twice as a woman, first when he asks Freyja about the secret of Baldr's invulnerability and secondly when he in the shape of þǫkk prevents Baldr from being released from Hel's domain. They show us Loki in the same kind of situation, only less brutal, than where he is pictured as a pregnant woman. This is again the case in a very obscure stanza of the Hyndluljóð (41):

Loki át hiarta   lindi brendo[1],
fann hann halfsviðinn   hugstein kono;
varð Loptr kviðugr   af kono illri,
þaðan er á foldo   flagð hvert komit.

The stanza is relatively late with regard to the development of Loki's character; he is here the procreator of all wicked beings and has been abased into a kind of heathen devil. How little the author, however, understood the real meaning of the mythological conceptions he mentions in this part of the Hyndluljóð, becomes clear from the preceding stanza where the giving birth to Fenrir and to Sleipnir are represented as equally bad. But although the stanza in its present form may be of a rather doubtful character, the myth itself alluded to can not be discarded in such an easy way. The Norwegian physician Reichborn-Kjennerud says about this story that it is unparalleled in Old-Norse traditions[1], but this does not imply, that it could not be of genuine Scandinavian origin. Axel Olrik has quoted a Lithuanian folk-tale, where a girl eats the heart of a burnt hermit and two hours afterwards gives birth to a marvellous boy who does not wait a moment before asking his grandfather to put the horses to the carriage.[2] Olrik thinks that the likeness between this folk-tale and the Hyndluljóð is so great — the heart is preserved although the corpse is burnt; when eaten it causes pregnancy; the child that is born shows the same qualities as those of the owner of the heart — that he feels himself obliged to suppose some connection between them; the story in the Eddic poem loses all its mysteriousness — but at the same time also all its interest — if we consider it as an adaptation of a popular tale from Eastern Europe. There is no proof whatever for such a supposition. On the contrary, the fact that in the Lithuanian tale the heart is swallowed by a girl and in the Hyndluljóð by Loki shows, that there are strong differences between these stories as to their meaning, and the fact itself that a heart is eaten and that this causes a child to be born belongs to a belief, that is wide spread and may be found in differents parts of the world. The heart is the seat of life and whosoever wants to obtain the qualities of a certain being can not do it in a more efficacious manner than by eating this organ. So did Sigurd, who after eating the dragon's heart obtained the knowledge of the birds' language. The belief, that one may become pregnant by eating an object, a fruit, a part of an animal, or whatever it may be, need not be illustrated by examples as almost every collection of folk-tales contains many of them. In an extraordinarily great number of these stories pregnancy is caused by the eating of fish[1]; a very interesting specimen is the irish story about Tuan mac Cairill who had been changed into a deer, a wild boar, a vulture and a fish; in this last shape he was eaten by a woman and reborn as a child.[2] Hence it is continuing in the same train of thought, when the swallowing of a vital organ like the heart has the same effect. The Lapp sorcerer who, according to a Norwegian tale[3], wished to eat the hearts of nine men in order to obtain everlasting life and the power of making himself invisible, obviously had the same idea about the qualities which may be acquired by eating this organ. It is a worldwide belief that by eating the heart or any other vital organ of a human being or of an animal, that the qualities inherent in it, are transmitted; therefore it is unwise to eat the heart of a hare, whilst it is highly beneficial to swallow the same organ of a slain enemy, a lion or a bear.

---

[1] The first line seems to be bungled in some way or another; *H. Pipping*, Studier i Nordisk Filologi XVIII, 4 p. 46—52 suggests the following emendation *Iókz af hiarta íviðu brendu*, which is indeed a very ingenious guess, but one that cannot be proved.

---

[1] Vår gamle trolldomsmedisin (Skrifter utgitt av Det norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo, Hist.-Filos. Klasse 1927 No. 6) p. 24.

[2] Festskrift Feilberg p. 556 ff.; Miss Gras l.c. p. 119 repeats the arguments of Olrik, only adding a few very superficial remarks intended to throw doubt on these traditions.

But if this be granted, still the fact remains that the heart of the witch is half-burnt, which shows a remarkable likeness to the Lithuanian folk-tale. Still I do not believe that this gives us the right to derive the Old-Norse myth from a popular tradition in Eastern-Europe. Witches and other obnoxious beings had to be destroyed by fire, if man wanted to get rid of them; this is the method always applied to the destruction of a draugr. The idea might easily arise that the heart, as the principal organ and the seat of psychical qualities, was difficult to annihilate, when its owner was of an exceptionally mischievous character. The poet calls the witch's heart *hugsteinn* and it is possible, that he wanted to express by this kenning, that it was so hard that even fire could not damage it. Is it then necessary to fetch a modern tale from a Baltic people, only to explain a motive that could so easily arise on the basis of the Scandinavian belief itself? Again we state, that it is not enough, if one wishes to accept such connections between two traditions, belonging to different times and different peoples, when a few minor traits show some resemblance, more especially if they belong to the belief current among several peoples of the earth.

---

[1] Cf. *Bächtold-Stäubli*, Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens II, col. 1032; *Bolte-Polivka*, Anmerkungen I, p. 544—545.

[2] *D' Arbois de Jubainville*, Le cycle mythologique irlandais p. 57. Tales about women who become pregnant by swallowing worms in a bucket with water, were also current in Ireland; cf. *MacCulloch*, Celtic Mythology p. 140.

[3] Cf. *Reichborn-Kjennerud* l. c.

But although I am of opinion, that the stanza of the Hyndluljóð may ultimately go back to Scandinavian popular belief, I do not wish to conclude, that it is remnant of a genuine heathen myth. We can neither affirm nor deny it; perhaps it is safest to exclude it from our argument and to consider it as a pure fiction, giving fresh evidence for the evil character of Loki.

The transformation of Loki into a woman and his becoming pregnant may be considered as belonging to an early stage of the Scandinavian religion, although it may have been ultimately developed into opprobrious tales about this highly compromised god. The fact, that the same is told about Othin, makes it plausible, that we are touching here a very old section of religious belief, where the connection between Othin and Loki was very intimate.

Two solutions of the problem may be proposed. Olrik has already compared the Tacitean account about Tuisto, the Teutonic creator of mankind and it is generally accepted that the name of this primeval being denotes his bisexual character.[1] We find the same conception in the Old-Norse myth about Ymir, told by Snorri in his Gylfaginning; while this being was asleep from the sweat under his right arm there came forth the first human couple and by rubbing his legs the hrímþursar were born. The Indian Yama, the Iranian Yima and Zrvân are likewise hermaphroditic and several more examples might be adduced from other religions as well. Therefore it becomes possible to assign Loki to this group of gods, but there is one serious difficulty: the Scandinavian religion gives to this double-sexed primeval being the name Ymir and that this conception reaches back into the mists of farthest antiquity is proved by the undeniable connection between the words Ymir and Yama. Is it then possible to assign Loki a place in this selfsame character at the side of Ymir?

But there are more instances of bisexual divine beings, notably among the gods of fertility. In Cyprus there was a statue of the Venus barbata, called *Aphroditon* by Aristophanes and we hear about a deity Luna to whom sacrifices were made by men in the clothes of women and by women in those of men. We are likewise reminded of the Oschophoria at Athens, where chosen boys were dressed up as girls and taught to imitate the gait and voice and bearing of maidens.[2] In India we meat the divine couple of Šiva and Kālī, sometimes represented as one single being, as an *ardhanārīšvara.*[3] These conceptions were not at all unknown among the Germans: Tacitus tells of a cult of the twin-brothers the Alcis among the Naharnavali, an East-Germanic tribe; the rites were performed by a priest *muliebri ornatu.* The Scandinavian god Nerthus may have shown the same character, since among Germanic tribes in the Cimbrian peninsula, as Tacitus affirms, a goddess Nerthus was venerated.[1] There is no reason to doubt, that the Germans knew the conception of a fertility-deity in the double aspect of god and goddess, and when Jungner affirms[2] that among the Scandinavians a hermaphroditical deity could not have played any considerable rôle in relatively recent times, because in the historical sources *ergi* is one of the most heinous crimes, he does not take sufficiently into account that Saxo Grammaticus still mentions with horror the sacrifices at Upsala, renowned for their »effeminatos corporum motus scenicosque mimorum plausus ac mollia nolarum crepitacula».[3] Moreover in religious practices of several peoples things are allowed and even highly recommended, that are utterly forbidden as moral depravations in ordinary times. The disgust for a man's *ergi* does by no means exclude the possibility, that in the cult of a fertility-god the changing of sex may not have taken place. The idea itself of a divine being, having at the same time a male and a female sex is no proof of depravation; earth herself is in spring female, but in automn male, as *André Jolles* has observed in a very interesting paper about the changing of sex[4]; what then is in more conformance with this natural phenomenon than a vegetation-god showing the same duality of character?

---

[1] *K. Müllenhoff*, Deutsche Altertumskunde IV, p. 113.

[2] *Farnell*, The Cults of the Greek States II, p. 628 sqq.

[3] Sten Konow in the Festskrift Kjær p. 58.

May we then rally to the thesis of *F. R. Schröder*[5], that

---

[1] For this female Nerthus I may refer to my remarks in my paper FFComm. No. 94, p. 37 and note 84, where I have emphasized the fact that the name Nerthus-Njǫrðr denotes the male god, but this does not exclude him from being bisexual, as well as the Venus barbata who bears a female name although she is none the less a male god.

[2] Gudinnan Frigg och Als härad p. 234.

[3] Lib. VI, edition Olrik-Ræder I, p. 154.

[4] Geschlechtswechsel in Literatur und Volkskunde, Schriftenreihe der Societät »Jocosia» zu Leipzig, Heft 5, p. 160.

[5] Germanentum und Hellenismus p. 115 sq.

Loki really is a vegetation-deity and even originally of a bisexual character? It seems to me, that in this form, the solution is too categorical; we must leave the possibility open, that Loki at some time of the historical development of the Scandinavian religious conceptions has shown particular traits that remind us of fertility-demons, but we would be too rash in our conclusion, if we proceeded so far as to say that his original character was that of a hermaphroditic vegetation-deity.

5. The ethical character of Loki

Although the family of the Old-Norse gods is not altogether faultless as to its morals, Loki makes on the whole a very unfavourable impression, by which he seems to be in a somewhat isolated position among the deities. It is, of course, self-evident, that the devilish character of Loki has been developed under the influence of Christian ideas; here the conception of a principle of wickedness, of a perpetual foe to mankind and an opponent of God himself, was so prevalent, that it could not but attract a figure such as Loki about whom evil rumours were whispered. But even in a time, when Christian influence can have been only very slight, Loki stood in a close connection with such evil-renowned beings as Hel or Fenrir.

The myths represent him mostly as a mischief-maker. I have tried to demonstrate in § VII, 2, that his remarkably wavering position on the verge of the divine and the demoniac worlds, does not place him in direct opposition to the Asir. In fact, in a great many myths he is a companion of the gods who is able to entice them into a dangerous conflict with the trolls, but who is unvariably obliged to mend the evil he has done. The kind of evil differs. As one of the chief opponents in the Ragnarǫk he shows himself in his worst character; and when he delivers Iðunn with her apples of rejuvenation into the power of a giant, he causes a dire calamity for the gods. But on the other hand, cutting the hair of Sif, deceiving the poor dwarf Brokkr, stealing a jewel from Freyja, these are more the tricks of a naughty boy than of a benevolent demon.

If we call him a thief and a deceiver, we might produce a mass of material to prove this qualification. But I think it is better to give a definition as MacCulloch has done: he was also an embodiment of the mischief-maker, so common in all states of society, whose mischief has often dire results for himself or others.[1] I do not wish to put this as the original conception, from which the very complicated figure of Loki has been developed, but as the central point of his character, from which the different attitudes radiate in all directions. Or perhaps we had better choose an other simile, such as Prof. *André Jolles* suggested to me during a conversation on this subject; the mythical tradition about Loki gives the impression of a funnel, into which a very inordinate mass of tales and ideas may be collected. Loki may have had a strong attractive power over a wide range of mythological tales and folkloristic motives, but the magnet that exercised this attraction, was again nothing else but his character of mischief-maker.

If we wish to explain the religious phenomenon, that in Old-Norse tradition bears the name of Loki, we must start from this characteristic of mischief-maker. This can not be an accessory detail, but it must be the very core of the conception. Furthermore we have to look for an explanation of his bisexual character, if possible in direct connection with his rôle as mischief-maker. The Old-Norse tradition, however, does not give us the clue to a satisfactory solution of this problem; hence we have to look for more information in other fields of scientific research, that is, in folklore and in ethnology.

---

[1] *J. A. MacCulloch,* Eddic Mythology (Boston 1930) p. 149.

CHAPTER XI

LOKI AND MODERN FOLK-LORE

1. Survey of the folkloristic material

Axel Olrik has given a very complete collection of the popular traditions about Loki in a paper which I have had the occasion to mention already several times.[1] While I will refer the reader to his exposition of the extant material for all the necessary details, I wish only shortly to mention here the adduced examples in order that it may be possible to follow the discussion of the facts.

I. *Sacrificial ceremonies on the family hearth*
  a. A milk-tooth is thrown into the fire, whilst the child says »Locke, ge mig en bentand för en guldtand» or a corresponding formula. This custom is only found in Sweden [2] and it has spread even to Swedish Finland [3] and been adopted also by the Finnish speaking inhabitants.[4]
  b. The membrane of boiled milk is thrown into the

---

[1] Loke i nyere overlevering in Danske Studier 1908, p. 193—207 and 1909, p. 69—84.

[2] *Hyltén-Cavallius*, Wärend och Wyrdarne² I p. 176; *Olrik*, DS 1909 p. 78—79.

[3] *G. Landtman*, Folktro och Trolldom (Finlands Svenska Folkdiktning VII, 1) p. 726—729.

[4] *N. Setälä*, Finnisch-Ugrische Forschungen XII, p. 251.

fire; the custom is known in Norway[1] as well as in Sweden.[2]

c. Some flour is thrown into the fire, when porridge is made. Only known in Telemark.[3] There are however more sacrifices of this kind.[4]

d. The idea, that a spirit, called Loke, dwells in the fire is moreover suggested by the formula, said when the fire makes a crackling noise: »Lokji giver sine børn hug» or »Lokje dengjer bon'e sine». Only known in Norway.[5]

II. *Natural phenomena*

a. When in spring or in the beginning of summer the air is seen vibrating by the heat of the sun, the Juttish peasant says: »Lokke driver idag med sine geder» (West-Jutland, Skaane and Bornholm) or »Lokemand saar sin havresæd» (Northern- and Middle Jutland).[6]

b. The sulfurous smell after a flash of lightning is called on the Faroes »*lokadaun*».[7]

c. In the same islands Sirius is called *lokabrenna*.[8]

d. In Iceland the saw is known »Leingi geingr Loki ok þór, léttir ei hríðum». Probably this denotes that the bad weather will not come to an end.[9]

---

[1] *Storaker*, Tiden i den Norske Folketro, Norsk Folkeminnelag II, § 462. Sometimes the words were said: »De' ska Lokje ha'!»

[2] *Bächtold-Stäubli*, Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens III, c. 1762.

[3] *R. Berge, M. B. Landstad* (Norske Folkeminnesamlarar II, 2, Risør 1920) p. 18. The girl said, when asked why she did so: »login laut au hava litt». Perhaps *login* stands for Loki.

[4] Cf. *Olrik-Ellekilde*, Nordens Gudeverden p. 255 sqq.

[5] *Olrik*, DS 1909, p. 78; *Storaker*, Elementerne i den norske folketro (Norsk Folkeminnelag X) p. 79.

[6] *Olrik*, DS 1909, p. 71—72.

[7] *Olrik*, DS 1908, p. 204.

[8] *Olrik*, ibid.

[9] *Olrik*, DS 1908, p. 206.

III. *Loki in connection with weeds*
In Denmark different kinds of weeds are called *Lokes græs* or *Lokes havre.*[1] When it is nice weather in spring the peasants in Hedemark say: »Loke saar havre».[2] For Jutland see the examples under II a.

IV. *Loki and the spider*
In Sweden this insect is known under the names of *locke*, *lock* and the cobweb as *locka-nät*, *lockasnara.*[3]

V. *Loki and the vermin*
In Telemark it is believed that Lokje brings lice on a sledge on Maundy Thursday.[4]

VI. *Loki as a deceiver*
The only instances are two phrases quoted by Peder Syv: *at føre Lokkes breve* and *at høre paa Lockens eventyr*. In Iceland a big lie is called a *lokalýgi.*[5]

2. Olrik's hypothesis about the fire-demon Loki

In his above-mentioned study Olrik has paid particular attention to the examples quoted by me under I a and b, II a. The sacrifice to the fire on the hearth, combined with the name of Loki proves that according to Norwegian and Swedish conceptions Loki resides in this fire and that he is a representation of it. Danish traditions on the contrary show him as a *lysflimre-vætten*, which may be rendered in English as a spirit connected with the phenomenon of the summer-colts. He tries to combine these widely different conceptions by supposing, that there has been from very remote times the conception of Loki as a small spirit, whose name means »flame» or »fire-spirit» (*lysmand*). In Denmark he was thought of as *luftflimmeret*, in Norway and Sweden as the fire on the hearth. Out of these conceptions he gets the character of a teasing and thievish being. Here we must seek for the connection of Loki, for he is also of small stature and renowned as a trickster and a thief; hence — and here Olrik formulates his conclusion in the most prudent way — »Traits of the spirit of popular belief must have passed over onto the god Loki and contributed to give him a queer and complicated personality».[1]

---

[1] *Feilberg*, Ordbog s.v.

[2] *Visted*, Vor gamle bondekultur p. 328.

[3] *H. Celander*, Lokes mystiska ursprung p. 18—26.

[4] *Visted* l.c. Skjærtorsdagaften skulde man vri tre pisker til at sætte istand slæden for Lokje, som da kom kjørendes med et læs lopper og hadde kjørt slæden itu, da læsset var meget tungt.

[5] DS 1909, p. 78.

Against these conclusions serious objections may be raised. In the first place the connection between the god Loki and the fire-demon is not at all evident. The likeness is exclusively the teasing and thievish characteristic of both. Now this characteristic is not at all predominant in the popular traditions and Olrik can not do more than assert that it grew out of the conception of the fire-spirit. But then we may say that such a characteristic is not a special quality of a fire-spirit, but of the spirits in general; so the teasing Loki belongs to the wide group of the *vætter* and shows no particular affinities with the spirit on the hearth.

But even the idea of an original fire-spirit seems to me highly questionable. I must confess that I can not make any clear representation of such a spirit, when it could develop either into the hearth-spirit or into the phenomenon of the summer-colts. For a fire-spirit is not a demon in one way or another connected with the abstract idea of fire, light, vibrating air or what else we may wish to imagine; it is supposed to be present in a definite form of fire. Moreover a mythical view of a natural phenomenon is quite a different thing from a spirit to which sacrifices are made. In fact, the ideas underlying both conceptions may be originally quite independant from the idea of fire.

---

[1] DS 1909, p. 84.

It will be worth while to discuss these forms of popular belief and to enter into details. Children are said to throw a milk-tooth into the fire with the words that Lokje may take it, but that he must give in return a tooth of gold. The custom and the rhyme are equally well known in all parts of the Teutonic world. But it is only in Sweden that the name of Lokje enters into the formula. In Norway they say e.g.:

> Ell, ell, nò ska du faa i beintonn
> Gje sò meg att i gulltonn.[1]

From Swedish Finland we have many examples of formulas with the names *Lock* or *nock* (both also names for the spider); besides we find mentioned *gobb* or *onsgobb*, that is »the old man of the oven». Or the formula is said in the form »Ge mej en bentann i stället for en gulltann» without any particular reference to a spirit.[2]

The ordinary form of the formula however does not contain the name of Loke or a kindred being, but of a mouse. This is found everywhere among the Teutonic peoples. In Denmark it is not less common than in the other Scandinavian countries[3]; in Germany and Holland it is also the usual form.[4] Furthermore examples are collected among the Slavonic, the Finnish, the Lithuanian and the Lettish peoples.[1] Therefore we must conclude that the formula with the name of Loki is only found in a very restricted part of the wide area where the rhyme itself is current; the Swedish formula is an *exceptional* and not a traditional form. We must assent to the opinion expressed by the Danish scholar *F. Ohrt*[2], that Loki has been introduced into a formula, that itself is surely not of genuine Scandinavian origin.

---

[1] *P. Lunde*, Kynnehuset (Norsk Folkeminnelag VI, p. 33). Cf. also *H. O. Opedal*, Makter of Menneske, ibid. No. 23 p. 119. The first tradition is from Vestagder, the latter from Hardanger.

[2] *G. Landtman*, Folkloristiska och Etnografiska Studier III, p. 17—18.

[3] Examples are collected by *Feilberg*, Ordbog II, p. 631.

[4] Cf. *Wuttke*, Der deutsche Volksaberglaube der Gegenwart p. 351.

In fact, the sacrifice has nothing to do with the element of fire nor properly speaking with a fire-spirit. I have treated this subject in the French periodical Revue anthropologique.[3] Here I have drawn attention to the fact that in a great deal of examples it is stated that the tooth must be thrown behind the back or over the shoulders. Now this way of throwing an object backwards denotes clearly the character of the sacrifice: it is given to the spirits of the dead. The connection with the hearth-fire is then easily explained; here the family-ancestor, *hustomten*, is believed to reside and the sacrifice is not intended for the fire itself, nor for the fire-spirit, but for the tutelary-ghost of the family. In the same way the mouse may be explained as a manifestation of the spirits of the dead, and that among the many possible forms (besides the mouse also the serpent, the butterfly, the bird) just this one is chosen, is obviously due to the fact that this rodent has such enviable sharp and sound teeth.

So the sacrifice of the tooth has originally nothing to do with the heathen deity Loki. We might ask if the throwing of the membrane of the milk or of some flour is to be interpreted as a sacrifice to this god. First we must dismiss the latter example, for the tradition quoted by Landstad only speaks of fire and not at all about Loki. The meaning of the former custom is not clear to me, as I do not know if the membrane is considered as a desirable or as a useless part of the milk. The latter supposition seems to me the most probable and in this case it is to be doubted, if we have the right to speak of a sacrifice; it may simply be a means of annihilating it.

---

[1] Cf. *Mansikka*, FFComm. No. 87 p. 9 note.

[2] Trylleord fremmede og danske, Danmarks Folkeminder No. 25, p. 99. —. Likewise *H. Celander* l.c. 53 says that this tradition about Loki is only a petrified formula without any living meaning and that it is therefore most prudent not to build any hypothesis about the mythical nature of Loki on this custom.

[3] *Le Jet de la Dent*, Revue anthropologique XL (1930) p. 87—89.

If we look at corresponding practices current among kindred peoples, we arrive at the same conclusion. In Germany the bristling noise of the fire is said to mean quarrel or calumny; if there are sparks on the hearth this indicates a visit. Such innocent omens are, of course, no relics of heathen belief. Then there exists the custom of feeding the fire, by throwing some morsels of every meal (in Bohemia) or some crumbs of bread into it. Sometimes, however, it is expressly stated, that this sacrifice is intended for the poor souls in purgatory, a christianised form of the idea, that the dead in general, but originally the dead members of the family, residing in the ancestral hearth, are honoured by such a sacrifice. Moreover customs, like those that the new-married woman is led round the hearth or that the fire is extinguished when there is a death in the house, clearly presupposes a very close connection between the fire on the hearth and the spirits of the ancestors.[1] Folkloristic evidence of this kind makes it fairly certain, that in Scandinavia the same belief must have been prevalent.

In any case we learn from it that in Scandinavia the name of Loki was combined with fire. But this connection is only limited to some regions and seems to be crystalized in a couple of traditional phrases. It would be arbitrary to conclude from it, that Loki was mentioned because originally he has been a fire-spirit.

---

[1] Cf. *Wuttke*, Der deutsche Volksaberglaube der Gegenwart §§ 294, 430, 458, 566 and 737.

Still more difficult is the Danish belief about Lokke as a name for the summer-colts. It has been observed by *Celander*[1], that Lokke is not the name for the undulating warm air, but that this is called his cattle (*hjord*, *geder*, *faar*). We are reminded of the Frisian expression *do summerkatte lope* as well as of the English *summercolt*. In Bornholm people speak about *Kullebondens svin*. Therefore we may surmise that the glittering, undulating air seen above a cornfield has made the same impression upon the people as the wind running through the cornstalks and making billowing furrows in them. They found for it the simile of animals moving through or above the field. Cattle, however, suggests a being, who ownes and takes care of them. This being may be called *kullebonden* or *bjergmanden*, even *Lokke*, *Lokkemand*, *Lukas* or *Jakob Löj*[2]; it is obvious that he is only a *vætte* supposed to live on the spot, where the phenomenon is observed. The name *Lokke*, then, does not belong to it from the very beginning, and it is still an open question what the name originally may have meant.

Sometimes the phrase is *Loke sows oats;* we found this form in Jutland as well as in Hedemark. The warm air, vibrating in spring above the field, denotes that it is excellent weather for the growing of plants, to be sure not only of useful ones but also of weeds. We have already seen that the Juttish people speak about *Lokes græs* and *Lokes havre*. But when we see that the Swedish names are *trollhavre*, *pukhavre* or *liot'agär*, we will not explain this with *Lundgren* by a substitution of the devil for the wicked

---

[1] L.c. p. 55.

[2] Cf. *Feilberg*, Ordbog II, p. 445.

Loki[1], but on the contrary by assuming, that Loki is a particular name for the bad spirit, to whom the origin of all nuisible plants and animals is ascribed.

The case is very clear when Loki is said to bring vermin. For here he takes the rôle of the Christian Beelzebub, the god of flies and it is only the reminiscence of the Loki-figure in the last form of its development, that has led to this identification. It is not even necessary to accept any connection with those Old-Norse myths where he takes the shape of a fly or a flea.

Our conclusion is, that Olrik has built his hypothesis upon the frail base of popular traditions, where the name of Loki has been introduced afterwards. This explains why he is brought into connection with such very different phenomena as the sulfurous smell after a flash of lightning, the fire on the hearth, vermin, weeds and vibrating air on a hot day. If the idea of a fire-demon had been the root, from which modern popular traditions about Loki sprung, they would not have been so utterly disconnected. And when we wish to explain, why he has been introduced into these connections, we must not seek the solution of the problem in his fire-nature, but in some other element, that made him liable to such avatars in a time, when Loki was no longer a heathen god but only a vague recollection, hovering in the minds of Christianised people.

3. The hypothesis of Hilding Celander

In my criticism of Olrik I have trodden many a time in the footprints of *Hilding Celander*, who has given a vigorous criticism of the theory about the fire-spirit. I could leave out of the discussion several minor points, that are sufficiently treated in his paper. He urges that the

---

[1] Språkliga intyg om hednisk gudatro i Sverige p. 80.

Lokje of popular tradition bears all the characteristic traits of an elfish spirit, a *vätte*, *nisse*, *bjergmand*, or whatever you may like to call them. Hence he is of opinion, that Loki originally has been such a spirit and that not only popular traditions but even a few hints in mythological literature give sufficient evidence for it. Of course they do. But it does not prove the thesis of Celander. For if we choose instead of well defined mythical beings of a lower order a kind of greatest common measure, in which they may be comprised, it is evident that a sharp formulation of the problem is altogether impossible. To explain the Loki of two thousand years ago Celander places himself on the standpoint of the modern representations about the *vätte*. But here we find only a vague and confused amalgamation of originally clear-cut mythological beings each with its own activities in its own domain. I may refer the reader to the study of *G. Landtman*[1], who frequently stresses the fact, that the names for a certain being are numerous and variable. The story, that a person is bidden by a mythical being to assist at the child-birth of his wife, is told without distinction of »underbyggare, tomtar, bergtroll, vattenvarelser, råd, troll och obestämde väsen». I should like to propose as a name for these »vague beings» the word *vätte*, which has become in course of time, and surely in folkloristic treatises, devoid of all concrete meaning.

By this conception Celander considerably weakens his attack on the hypothesis of Olrik. He is, of course, quite right, when he says that the Lokje of Telemark is a broader conception than »hearth-fire», but more in general a *vätte*, but it does not follow that Loki, who may be represented by this Norwegian Lokje, should have been likewise such a *vätte*. The vague ideas about this being may be as well the result of the disintegration of popular belief in relatively modern times and it is quite possible, that a thousand years ago this Telemarkian Lokje has been a spirit of the hearth-fire in the strictest sense of the word.

---

[1] Hustomtens forvantskap och härstamning, in Folkloristiska och etnografiska Studier III (Helsingfors 1922).

Starting from this basis it is easy for Celander to find proofs for his explanation everywhere. Loki is a typical elfish being in as far as he is a master in transformations, sudden disappearances and tricks of all kind. Scandinavian mythology even knows him as a small and nimble being, for the Sorlaþáttr describes him as *ekki mikill vǫxtum.* And Celander argues in the following way: although the Þáttr is not very reliable, this particular detail must be considered as original. Why? Because it fits well into his theory? But then he leaves out of account and does not think it worth while discussing, that there are more possible explanations for the small stature of Loki in this fabulous story of the 12th century. I have already mentioned the fact that according to Olrik's epic law of opposition the strong and huge Thor must be accompanied by a nimble and witty being. Þjálfi who is dragged through the stream hanging at Thors belt and who in another myth finds an excellent stratagem in the battle against Hrungnir, shows the same qualities as Loki, when he accompanies Thor to Thrymr or when he is dragged through the air by an eagle. The small size of Loki is then only a motive of epic tales. But there is also another reason to distrust the story of the Sorlaþáttr; in the time when this was composed heathen religion had disappeared and Christianity superseded it. This may have caused a change in the conception of Loki and then of course this has taken place in a line of development, of which the Telemarkian Lokje and his other Scandinavian colleagues form the end. Is there any reason to take this descriptive sentence of the þáttr as valuable evidence for the original conception of Loki? Putting the question is at the same time giving its answer.

For Celander the most interesting point of the cycle of popular traditions is the Swedish name for the spider: *locke* and for the cobweb: *lockanät* or *lockasnara.* This gains particular importance because in the Snorra Edda a myth is related about Loki inventing the fishing-net. And because the cobweb is also called *dvärganät*, we may conclude that the name goes back to a conception of Loki, if we presuppose at the same time, that the locke of popular belief has been a kind of *vätte*, related to the dwarfs. If, however, any nearer relation must be assumed between the spider and the god Loki, this should not depend only on the similarity of the name, but also on the mythical or religious representations attached to it. We might have expected that Celander would try to prove that either Loki originally has had some particular connection with the spider, or that cobwebs have been considered as an invention of Loki. Celander obviously shrinks back from this conclusion and in the course of his study he undoes the knot he has tied so vigorously at the beginning.

The cobweb is called *lockanät* because a supernatural being called Locke is supposed to have invented it. The reason is because the dwarfs and other elfish beings are clever artisans and because on the other hand the miracle of the wonderful cobweb, in autumn being hung mysteriously during the night between the trees and the shrubs demands a special explanation. The popular fantasy is answered by the myth, that the dwarfs or the elves have done it. Quite possible and it may even be granted that such a mythical interpretation is of exceedingly remote antiquity. But why must the connection of Loki and the cobweb have been of the same hoary antiquity? Now we might expect Celander to adduce the argument of the name. The spider is called Locke and its web lockanät; hence these words presuppose the identity of Loki and the word locke for spider. Here again Celander does not venture to draw this conclusion. Although he derives both words from the verb *lúkan*, he arrives at two totally different conceptions. The word Loki means »the closer», but the being that comprises something is the spirit of the mountain *(bergmannen)*, where the dead are gathered, or as we may say in the well-known terminology: a *vätte*. And the spider is called locke because it encloses, ensnares insects.

What then remains of the alleged identity of the spider and Loki? If there is on the one hand a vätte with the name locke and on the other hand the spidername locke, there is no reason why the identification should not have taken place at every period in heathen as well as in Christian times. It would have been an indication of no slight importance, if Celander had been able to prove, that a word as *lockanät* means the web spun by a vätte, that was called *locke*. Then the word *locke* for spider would have been derived from the composition *lockanät*, where people did not feel any more the right meaning of the first component. But Celander only adduces reasons of linguistic as well as of psychologic character for the subsequent identification of the two words. Why then should it be necessary to accept in the spider-name *locke* the same word-root as in Loki?

For the name of the heathen god and its modern continuations we observe forms with *k* and *kk*; the same is the case for the spider-name. Celander pretends that there is a complete identity between both words as to the geographical distribution of the forms with *k* and *kk*; in the Eastern-Scandinavian countries we find *locke*, in the Western area however *loke*. It is only possible to make such an affirmation, when we consider the isolated form *Loye Langbein*, used in Telemark for the spider, as derived from a word *loki*[1]. The hypothesis that in a position of feeble accentuation the sound *k* may pass into *j* in some Norwegian dialects, is indeed scarcely sufficient to prove 1. that in this case the same linguistic development has taken place, 2. that in this name the word Loye means »spider»[1] and 3. that this name has been known in the whole extent of Western-Scandinavian language. As long as this is not made plausible, we may regard the isolated name Loye Langbein as very suspect and we are obliged to arrive at a slightly different conclusion from that of Celander, *viz.* 1. The name *locke* for spider is only known in Sweden, 2. In Sweden and Danmark an elfish spirit is called by the same name. If this *locke* is the same as the Old-Norse Loki then the conclusion lies near at hand, that the *kk*-form in Sweden is due to a secundary development.

---

[1] Cf. *Ross*, Norsk Ordbog p. 486.

The etymology of *locke* »spider» proposed by Celander is of course only one out of many more possibilities. Loki may represent a **lukēn*, nom. agentis of a verb *lûkan* »to close». But the fundamental meaning is »to bind, to twist», as seems to be proved by on. *lokkr*, oe. *locc*, as compared with gr. *luginos* »fletted» and lit. *lugnas* »flexible». Then a word *locke* may be derived from a *n*-stem **lugēn* gen. **lugnós* giving the corresponding forms *loki* and *lokki*. But this word may have meant »the twister, the bender», not »the encloser, the ensnarer». Hence if we should accept the etymology of Loki as »the encloser» (and it must be emphasized that this is only a hypothetical explanation of the name), the relation with the spider's name is almost nihil, for if the word *locke* goes ultimately back to the same root *lûkan*, the meaning may not have been the same in both cases.

It is exceedingly dangerous to build a theory about a religious phenomenon upon the quicksands of etymologies. Because Celander himself is not able to make use of the etymology of *locke* for his hypothesis about Loki's character as an original vätte, we may dismiss it from our discussion. But then the last support of his theory has given way. If the similarity between the names of Loki and the spider is not original at all, the likeness between the cobweb and the fishing-net invented by Loki dwindles into a mere accident. The conception of a vätte, in the modern sense of the word, is far too vague and broad to give us the clue to the real meaning of Loki.[1] The results, arrived at by Celander, are not more convincing than those of Olrik; methodologically his investigation is undoubtedly inferior to that of the Danish scholar. It is always better to start from a well circumscribed and tangible religious conception as e.g. a fire-spirit, than from such a wild and incoherent medley as the modern representations about the »vätte».

---

[1] Loye Langbein is compared by *Celander* p. 24 himself with a Swedish Hälge Högben. Then Loye can be something quite different from a word for spider. It may be f.i. a proper name.

4. The value of the folkloristic material

If I would not trespass beyond the boundary of this study, which has expanded already into considerable length on account of the polemical digressions I was obliged to start upon, I might have done more justice to the studies of Olrik and Celander than the case has been in the few pages I have been able to spend upon them. Nevertheless I hope to have succeeded in showing that the explanations proposed by both scholars are quite unsatisfactory. It would not be expected otherwise, because they laid their superstruction on a bad foundation: popular belief of modern people is a very inappropriate material to make use of, if we want to explain religious conceptions of heathen times going back about a millenium. I came to the same conclusion in my study on the popular traditions about Othin[1] and since I had the opportunity of treating it more theoretically elsewhere [2], I may think myself relieved from the necessity of repeating the same arguments.

---

[1] *Celander* seems sometimes to be inclined to make a more concise definition of the vätte, as a »spirit of the dead» (f.i. on p. 71), but he does not clearly express himself as to the question, if Loki has been a ghost, or an elfish spirit in general.

But one may expect me to explain the obvious reminiscences about Loki in modern popular lore. Of course I shall try to make it probable that these are no original and undistorted specimens of a very primitive conception of Loki, even older and more genuine than the sources dating from heathen times; on the contrary they are to me worthless deformations, that can not give us any idea about the conceptions that underlie the Old-Norse deity Loki.

First I wish to consider the very disappointing results to which Olrik has come on the basis of his investigation.[3] There are four different Loki conceptions, which I already had the opportunity of mentioning: 1. The firespirit of popular tradition, 2. The companion of Othin, an original culture-hero, 3. The companion of Thor, the servant of the thundergod, 4. The devilish Loki. If we ask in what way the first meaning, based on the traditions of modern popular lore, can have had any influence on the Loki-figure of heathen mythology or at any rate may be discovered in some of its particularities, we get the following answer: the Lokke-figures of popular belief, that is the two very distinct forms of the fire-spirit in Norway and the »Lysflimre-vætten» of Danish tradition, are both exceedingly old [4]: »They may, in some respects, have exerted an influence upon the small size and teasing character of Loki, and perhaps also on his thievish and even wicked character, although this last quality is not very important in the popular belief». In this sentence, a literal translation from the original, lies the total result of Olrik's study about the Lokke of folk-lore. In some respects it may have had influence upon such insignificant details as his small size or his teasing character, that evidently demands a more satisfactory explanation in other respects as well. But the rôle of Loki as the servant of the thundergod, was it not quite enough to explain his smallness and did the Esthonian tale, adduced by Olrik, not prove that he was a clever-minded person? I get the impression, that Olrik, who saw no means of introducing the fire-spirit through the main door, has tried to slip him in through the back-door. Had we not better leave him standing altogether outside, if he is only able to exert a very restricted influence »in some respects»?

---

[1] FFComm. No. 94.

[2] Die Bedeutung der Volkskunde für mythologische und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen, Germanisch Romanische Monatsschrift XX, p. 27—39 and Volkskunde en Volkenkunde als hulpwetenschappen der Godsdienstgeschiedenis, Mensch en Maatschappij.

[3] Festskrift Feilberg p. 587 sqq.

[4] Vi har altsaa to naturfødte Lokke-typer af ældgammelt udspring: mytiske opfattelser af tilværelsen i den naiveste form (p. 586).

But Olrik adduces a new argument for his quadruplication. The four different constituve elements has each his special name. The fire-spirit is called *Lokki*, a side form to *Logi; Lóðurr* is the name of the culture-hero; *Loptr* is the name of Thor's companion; *Loki* finally is the fettered demon. I will not insist upon the arbitrary character of this distinction, in no way borne out by the texts, nor upon the fact that there is no reason to identify Lóðurr with Loki, but I shall only follow in the footprints of Olrik. According to him Loki and Lokki may be hypocorystic names formed by the suffix *-ki*, the former from a name ending in one consonant, the latter from a word with two consonants. Hence Lokki as »Kosename» becomes quite accidentally the same as the name of the fire-spirit. In fact Olrik proceeds with the following statement[1]: »In this way we may find an explanation for the mythical coherence by means of the circumstance that a divine thief of the fire (Lóðurr) in course of time coalesced with the thundergod's servant (Loptr) and partly also with the early lightspirit of popular belief (Lokki)». What then is the use of the long and learned digressions about these religious conceptions, if we are obliged finally to concede that mere chance, a secondary similarity between divine names, has brought about the curious and complicated figure of the Eddic Loki? To believe in such an accident is to give up all hope of a real explanation. Should there be no religious elements that belong to the same sphere of conceptions, should there be no original meaning from which the different characteristics of Loki could emanate, then a single name could not have worked the miracle of Loki's personality. Even if we are inclined to accept with André Jolles that Loki has become a kind of basin into which mythological tales of all kind have been collected, then a name alone is scarcely sufficient to serve as a rallying-point; there must be also in the conception itself an element, that could attract such a variegated mass of tales, as is the case with Loki. This magnetical central point is, in my eyes, the teasing character of the god; the trickster type is liable to expansion in different directions and funny tales about deceivers and robbers may at all times be transferred to it. But again I must insist upon the fact, that such a trickster-type should not be confused with the elfish demons of popular belief.

---

[1] L.c. p. 590.

How then must we explain the different beings of popular lore that are called by names reminding one of Loki? If we consider the modern representations as the result of a secondary development, there is no reason to suppose that the different forms, as they are found in Norway, Sweden, Denmark and elsewhere, should be explained in the same way. It is even more probable, that under widely different circumstances the results of combinations and alterations must have been very divergent from each other. We may assume, e.g. that in countries as Norway and Iceland, where literary sources show a richly variegated tradition about Loki, its impress upon now-a-days popular tradition must be greater than in Denmark and Sweden, where the myths about Loki may be supposed but can not be proved to have existed.

The sacrifice of the tooth may be adduced as a first example. Why has Loki in Sweden been introduced into the formula of the milk-tooth? Obviously because people felt some connection between him and fire. Fire, as is well known, is always conceived of as a living being; the play of the flames, the noise of the burning wood, the dreadful danger of a conflagration are reasons enough for such a natural conception. Sometimes they speak in Norway of *varmekjerringa* or *huldra;* a very meagre form of personification. A more colourfull expression is *Eldbjør denger barna sine*, a parallel to the already quoted phrase *Lokje dengjer sine drengjer. Eldbjør* or in an older form *Ildbjørg* is a very amusing saint; for she is only the result of a queer misunderstanding. At the end of Yuletide there were formerly special ceremonies on eldbjørgs-day, the day when a sacrifice was made to the fire in order to prevent it from breaking out into conflagration during the next year. The ceremony intended to cover up the fire was called *ildbjørg*, and people were wont to drink a special mug of beer or as they called it an *Eldbjørsskaal* or *-minde.* This was the reason why *Eldbjør* was in later times considered as a particular saint to be venerated on this day and particularly connected with fire.[1] It is this fictitious saint, who gives a thrashing to her children, when the fire makes particular crackling noises.[2]

---

[1] Cf. Visted, Vor gamle bondekultur p. 242 sqq; Olrik-Ellekilde, Nordens Gudeverden p. 256 sqq.

[2] This is, of course, only a tale to explain the crackling noise, that is apt to attract people's attention and curiosity. When in Lesbos the wood begins to whistle in the fire, people say »Be silent»; if it obeys, an enemy is supposed to have abused you, if it does not, a

It may be that it is some misinterpretation of an elder *eldmor*, that is found at the side of it, or it may be that from the wish to personify the spirit on the hearth, people chose *Eldbjør*, because her name contained an element meaning fire. But then, why should they not identify *Loki* and the fire *logi*, which, as we have seen, induced even a mythographer of the Middle Ages to make a pun in the myth of Geirrøðr? And if so, what is then the real relation between Loki and fire, unless a superfluous coincidence of names?

So I reject the name of Loki in the tooth-formula and other kindred sayings as quite untraditional. But granted that an original connection should be admitted here, are we then anywhere nearer the problem, what the real meaning of this deity has been? Surely not, for in the practices, now-a-days connected with fire, different conceptions and beliefs are inextricably commingled. Let us take an example: at present in case of illness often a sacrifice is made to the fire. We have mentioned the milktooth. Also part of the clothes or of the medicine is thrown into the fire. This is a sacrifice to the fire or to the spirit of the hearth (*årevetten*) as Reichborn-Kjennerud says.[1] But what kind of spirit? Indeed a being representing fire? Or the spirit of the hearth or of the house, residing on the fire-place? Or the spirit of the ancestor, supposed to dwell in the same place? It is a well-known fact, that the spirits of the dead may cause illness of all kind and that they consequently have the power to cure it also.[2] The sacrifice to the fire in case of illness has nothing to do with this element, but is intended for the ancestor-

---

friend has spoken good of you (G. Georgeakis et L. Pineau, Le Folk-Lore de Lesbos p. 352). Perhaps the practice mentioned in the 17th titulus of the Indiculus Superstitionum et paganiarum *viz.* de observatione pagana in foco, has been of the same kind.

[1] Vår gamle trolldomsmedisin p. 150.

[2] Cf. my Van Alven en Elfen in Volkskunde 1931, p. 14 sqq.

spirit, who has taken its abode on the hearth.[1] But this is surely not the meaning in all the cases enumerated by the Norwegian scholar. The first bandage on a wound is thrown into the fire. Is it properly speaking a sacrifice? It is only a means to annihilate an object, that has been in magical contact with the wound; the first bandage was perhaps supposed to contain such bad matter as would cause inflammation (observe the similarity of notions between inflammation and flame) and then it was most expedient to destroy it utterly. When a child has for the first time got epileptic spasms or inflammation of the lungs, part of its clothes are burnt. Again we ask: is this a sacrifice? It is evident that it is not: these clothes contain part of the ill person, as its nails or hair or shoes or whatever you like, and if they are burnt the illness itself is destroyed.[2] If you want to render a witch inoffensive, you take a waxen image and then you burn it slowly; surely the witch will succumb to intolerable sufferings. Why should not one take a part of the clothes infected by the disease, and throw it into the fire in order to annihilate the illness itself? Sacrifice is an easy word for all such practices, but it would be advisable to use it only, when we are sure that the action is intended to influence a well-defined being, residing in the place where the sacrifice is made.

Loki as a kind of fire-spirit has nothing in common with the Loke who sows weeds. In expressions as *Lokes græs* or *Lokes havre* he is of course only a representative of the devil. The same is the case when he is said to bring vermin. Here we recognise Beelzebub in a new transformation. Here again there is no reason to look for old conceptions of Loki to explain these popular beliefs of later times. He is the bad Loki, who in the last phase of the Scandinavian mythographers' activity had been duly developed. We need not be amazed. Loki was a being of ambiguous reputation; when Christian creed declared that all the heathen gods were to be condemned as bad demons, Loki was certain to fall deepest of all. Moreover medieval monks, so clever in making the most absurd etymologies, surely have noticed the similarity between Loki and Lucifer. If it is true that by a kind of primeval revelation primitive peoples may have got an idea of a supreme god — as some ethnologists have pretended — then surely Teutonic religion had its devil avant le date. Loki, well known from a series of very funny stories, could easily be kept in people's memory and then he could make his appearance whenever it might seem possible to ascribe to him something that is dangerous or wicked. The close resemblance between the words Lokjen and Laakjen (the devil, from the adj. *laak* »wicked, bad») has also possibly exercised an influence to turn the heathen name Loki into a word of ill omen.[1] Why was he brought into connection with weeds? Surely not because he had some kind of relation with agricultural practices. But the explanation is as simple as possible: there are hundreds of tales about a creation of useful plants and animals by God and of nuisable ones by the devil. The famous collection of Dähnhardt gives a considerable amount of examples; they may be easily multiplied by running through the mythological tales of American-Indians, Australians or other primitive peoples. I only wish to quote one example[2] from Russia: when God and the devil together are creating the world,

---

[1] Sacrifices to dead ancestors are often made on the hearth, as e.g. those to the *Stopan* in Bulgaria (cf. Jan Machal, Slavic Mythology in Mythology of all Races III, p. 238), who is supposed to be descended from an ancestor distinguished for valour and bravery.

[2] In Finland some salt is rubbed against a tumour and then thrown into the fire whereupon the person jumps back from the hearth so as not to hear the crackling noise of the burning salt. This act is accompanied by the words *syylät palaa* or *syyläni palavat* (cf. F. A. Hästesko, Länsisuomalaiset tautien loitsut p. 15).

---

[1] Cf. *Visted*, l. c. p. 328.

[2] *Dähnhardt*, Natursagen I, p. 187.

God has sown the oats, the devil the weeds, God has created the cow, the devil the goat. Numerous nuisable plants have been called after the devil, from the *pukhavre*, already mentioned, to the *duivelsnaaigaren* and the *Teufelsabbiss.*

Words like *lokadaun* and *lokabrenna*, current in Iceland, are likewise due to the circumstance, that on this island of old lore the recollections about the heathen gods were not easily forgotten. How else could a phrase have been transmitted to posterity like the one quoted: *Leingi geingr Loki ok þór, léttir ei hríðum?*

In the theory of Olrik expressions as *føre Lokkes breve* did not fit in well. They are of course quite natural, if we consider Lokke as a devil, one of the numerous devils that invaded Scandinavia when the Christian religion conquered the North.

But I must confess, that I am confronted with the difficulty of explaining why the summercolts are called the goats of Lokke. I should not like to affirm that Olrik has explained it from his standpoint in a satisfactory way; the vibrating air can scarcely be personified as a mythical being of »luftflimmeret». I have already shown that people explained the dancing hot air above the field in which the objects themselves sometimes became invisible, and only moving and undulating waves of glittering hue were to be seen, by a flock of animals springing to and fro. These animals were of course of a supernatural kind; they belonged to a *bjergmand* or a *kullebonden.* But what is the reason that these creatures should have been so evilminded as to call them by a name, which could only suggest some evil trick of the devil? It seems to us so harmless, and even so pleasant, this floating of flashing waves on a warm day in spring. Obviously the peasant did not think so. Indeed the Juttish peasant says of the same phenomenon: *Lokemand sår sin havresæd.* We know what that means: the devil is out to sow weeds in the field. We may compare with it a saw, current in Mecklenburg:

Nu höddt de Düwel sin Schap up Land, wenn dat so flammert, wenn de Luft so wackelt. Hence the peasant looks with some distrust at those glittering waves, for such a heat in spring gives the weeds too great an advantage and they may suffocate the grain, that is growing more slowly. This may be the reason, why Lokemand has been supposed to be in action during the warm hours of a cloudless day in spring; we, civilised people of the towns, only visiting the country for a short time of relaxation and pleasure, do not realise the dangers that are assailing the peasant, for whom nature is an earnest companion, but not less an unrelenting foe.

The different popular traditions are useless for making a reconstruction of the original forms of the heathen belief. They are quite late and moreover debased and altered in their essential parts by so many ages of Christianity. But perhaps they may give us an indication as to the geographical area where Loki was known in heathen times. We found recollections in all the Scandinavian countries and we may conclude from that, that he was known in Sweden as well as in Iceland, in Denmark as in Norway. He is not a special development of West-Scandinavian myth-making, although it must be conceded, that it is not likely, that the numerous tales told about him in Iceland ever have been known all over the Scandinavian world. We must be very carefull in our conclusions, and I do not venture to go farther than the assumption, that it is especially as a trickster, that he has played a rôle in the myths of the heathen Swedes and Danes.

But this god was, as far as we can see, not venerated by any cult or sacrifice; he was only the hero of curious tales, mostly tales of scandal. Why has he survived the deluge, that swept away so many precious things of heathen lore? Other gods may have been bound up so tightly with rites of fertility or of the commemoration of the dead that they could not be extirpated so easily. But Loki, whom the heathens themselves, arriving at a higher degree of civilisation, may even have looked upon with contempt and annoyance? Certainly, Loki as a god could easily have been forgotten. But the tales current about him were so very interesting and amusing, that they might please even an audience of Christians, who could feel themselves relieved by the idea that the new creed had freed them from such abominable superstitions. There is one example of such a tale preserved unto modern times; the popular ballads treating of Thor's visit to the giant Thrymr. Here Loki acts as the cunning companion of the thundergod and the mediaeval ballads have not dropped his name; in Norway he is called Lokke Lagenson, in Denmark Lokke Leyemand, in Sweden Locke Lewe or Locke Loye[1]. Words like these, preserved in poems handed down from generation to generation, are not likely to pass from the memory of a people; they are crystallizations of a series of old traditions, mostly forgotten, but partly dimly recollected and they preserve moreover their typical character more precisely because a funny tale remains attached to it. Among people, who liked to hear about his adventures on his journey with the feigned bride of the giant, the memory of his name and of his deeds could not be lost altogether.

There were, indeed, many motives for a preservation of Loki. In the last times of myth-making he had been a favorite of poets and story-tellers and a large cycle of tales had been collected around him. The new creed turned him into a devil, to which he had shown always a dangerous proclivity. Hence one of the devil's names became surely

---

[1] The second element is not satisfactorily explained, cf. Bugge-Moe, Torsvisen i sin norske form p. 91sq, where the first opinion of Bugge (Lewe, Loye, Leimand etc. from Laufeyjarsonr) is given up, but a still more problematical explanation by means of the word Lóðurr is put instead of it. Is it not possible that the words are connected with *lugi* »lie» or dan. *løier*. sw. *löje* (from on. *hløgi*) 'joke, fun, trick'?

Loki; in fact it must have come to this, since the name reminded one so much of the terrible Lucifer. Besides the tales of old times were not forgotten; sometimes they were even renewed so as to satisfy new exigencies of literary tradition. Finally after many vicissitudes and in the course of a gradual debasement he has come down to modern times: a shapeless figure and a kind of queer bogey; let us be merciful and call him a »Vätte».

CHAPTER XII

LOKI AS A RELIGIOUS PHENOMENON

1. The present state of affairs

In the preceding chapters several theories about the origin of Loki have been discussed. The available material, supplied by literary monuments and by folk-lore, has been treated, as far as possible referring to earlier publications the results of which were quite in agreement with our own views. We find ourselves at last in the presence of a bewildering mass of contradictory theories, all however built up on the basis of data that are the same for every scholar.

Loki is explained as a god, whose importance is rapidly dwindling away in the time, when the literary traditions begin to shed any light upon the peoples of Scandinavia. Others, however, say that he is a rather subordinate religious being, raising himself in course of time but never arriving at the dignity of a full-blown god. All scholars are at any rate of the same opinion with regard to the secondary character of Loki as the fettered demon and as a kind of heathen devil, although there is by no means unanimity about the way in which this development has taken place. But the rest that remains after cutting away the different accessory elements, is judged sometimes as an amalgama of various characters, that originally had nothing in common with each other. Whilst one scholar was intent upon assigning to the literary conception of Loki the largest possible amount of foreign, and particularly of Christian influence, others were willing to consider him as a deity, essentially heathen. The contradictory elements in his personality were explained as the result of a rather accidental collision between utterly independant deities, but on the other hand there were scholars who started from one original conception and explained the multivarious Loki of later times as the result of an historical development.

Loki as a god of fire, of fertility and of the underworld; Loki as a culture-hero and as a malevolent demon; Loki as a servant of the thundergod, as an elfish spirit or as a »luftflimre-vætte»; the explanations are manifold and it seems simply a waste of time to try to explain a religious phenomenon, that has baffled the efforts of so many eminent scholars. Are we to add fresh proof of Loki's inextinguishable ingenuity in deluding gods, giants and scholars alike?

Still I am not quite so despondent about the possibility of understanding this deity. But it will be advisable to be careful not to fall into the errors, others have made before us. I exclude fundamentally the total amount of folkloristic material, and I consider as the only reliable source the literary traditions of the early Middle Ages. Furthermore I am of opinion that we must not try to understand Loki as a kind of mosaic pattern, to which different ages and various peoples or even several religious conceptions have furnished the singular stones. Although it can not be denied, that there are Christian influences, which have distorted the real heathen Loki, we must try to find the central point from which he may be explained.

This central point can only be found, if we are able to catch the real character of the god. Provisionally it is not necessary, it is even not advisable, to inquire into the origins of this religious phenomenon; we have only to ask: in what character did the heathen Scandinavians of the tenth century — to fix a date, when the conversion had not yet brought to an end the natural growth of pagan religion —

imagine Loki. The different humorous tales, heaped upon him by later mythographers, must then become intelligible, not as real trustworthy myths of course, but as the results of a development starting from this tenth century conception.

It is admitted by all scholars that the most outstanding feature of Loki is his character as a trickster and a thief. With only very few exceptions all the traditions about him show him as a cunning creature, delighting in making mischief. Sometimes he shows a rather childish pleasure in playing his tricks upon the gods, often he contrives to do serious damage, but in most cases he is obliged to repair his faults. I have laid stress on the important fact, that he is not the declared foe of the gods; on the contrary he is closely related to them and in his relations to the giants there are no indications of his being their ally. He may give the impression of standing on the verge of the world of divinities, still we have ample evidence that he is rather gliding down from the bright realm of the Asir into the darkness of trolls and monsters, than that he is a newcomer among the gods, looked upon with reasonable distrust.

Hence our task of finding the solution of the problem lies in the explication of this character of Loki. Scholars have been too prone to label him as a god belonging to the spheres of divine activity, a theoretical view on religious phenomena had set up as normalised for gods in general. Gods representing the forces of nature, the elements and the celestial bodies, gods of death and of fertility, gods that answer to the needs of primitive peoples in the course of their daily life, such were the types outside of which no satisfactory explanation seemed to be possible. Even those, who clearly observed Loki's character as a trickster, shrunk from making it the central point of the conception. Whenever an even trifling detail seemed to surpass this trickster-type, scholars eagerly followed the track it opened before them, hoping to detect a conception that either was more original, or at least could better fit into the theoretical notions about primitive deities.

Loki as a trickster is quite sufficient as a religious phenomenon. Scholars as Olrik and Von der Leyen have paralleled him with the well known tricksters of the North-American Indians. Indeed, here is the possibility of fruitful comparisons. When I give a short sketch of these American »deities» I do not intend to use them as a means of explaining Loki, for I am fully aware of the wide gulf that divides the aboriginal tribes of North-America from the heathen Scandinavians. I only want to give a clear idea about the conception of the trickster-type itself.

2. The trickster of primitive religions

In nearly all tribes of North-America in some way or another a supernatural being is known, whom several curious stories are told about, that show his cleverness in playing tricks on animals and men, but also showing that he himself may be the victim of an others intrigues. If people sometimes consider him with a certain respect, he is not less the hero of many a funny story, that is not particularly fit to enhance people's opinion about him. Very rarely is there any apparent connection between the various tales and jokes; they form rather a wild mass of heterogeneous traditions.

As an example we may take the Raven Txä'msem of the Tsimshian tribe of which F. Boas has given an accurate and full treatment.[1] Here we meet such tales as these: he makes a slave from a log of wood and makes use of him for his tricks. To procure fish he feigns death and is put into a coffin. But when they have got the fish they want, the slave eats it all himself and the poor remainder is left for the Raven. In this case the deceiver is deceived, but more often he has more success, e.g. when he kills a bear by inducing it to cut pieces of flesh from its own body or when he pretends to build a canoe, but only cuts with his axe into a mouldered cedar and meanwhile consumes all the provisions. It seems to be a very good joke, when he tries to imitate the magic forces of other beings and by doing so injures himself, as when he cuts meat out of his legs, or dugs it out of his body by means of a sharp stick or an arrow, when he kills his children for food or when he expects oil to drip out of heated hands.[1]

---

[1] Tsimshian Mythology in the Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology XXXI (1909—1910) Washington 1916, pp. 60 sqq.

These rather innocent merry tales, however, are not the only traditions about Txä'msem. His first deed was the robbing of daylight from heaven, where it was kept in a box and he succeeded by transforming himself into a cedar-leaf, that floated in the bucket from which the daughter of the chief of heaven was about to fetch water. She drank from the bucket and Raven was shortly afterwards reborn as an inmate of heaven. According to another story he procures fire with the aid of a deer; he causes the tides. But he is not always so friendly-minded, for it is through him that mankind has short life.

These examples will be sufficient to show that the Raven in Tsimshian mythology is a very complicated figure. He is a trickster with a clear proclivity to triviality; as to his character he is greedy, selfish and treacherous. But evidently he is more than that: he is also a culture-hero who procures for mankind such indispensable things as sunlight and fire. He is scarcely an object of worship; he may rather be compared with those heroes of the past, about whom indecorous tales may be narrated without sullying the spirit of reverence which attaches to the regnant gods.[2]

Such is the raven among tribes on the North-Pacific coast. In the central plains of North-America we find as the culture-hero of the Menomini Mänäbus, who has a human appearance. About him the same kind of tales are told.[1] He is the robber of fire and of tobacco and he survives the deluge by climbing on the top of a tree, from whence he despatches the beaver and the musk-rat to dive after land. But he is also the hero of a Jonah-story, and in a running contest he is tricked by an animal into losing his intestines. He imitates the magic arts of others by which he only makes things worse: by cutting slices of flesh from his wife's back he hurts her severely and when he rubs her with earth it does not help a bit.

---

[1] Ibiden p. 694—702.

[2] *Hartley Burr Alexander*, North-American Mythology p. 259.

I do not want to multiply the examples. I only wish to show what kind of stories usually are told about these supernatural beings, acting the rôle of culture-hero as well as trickster. Sometimes they have human, but more often animal forms. In the latter case the most frequent animal representations are the raven and the coyote; the raven on the Pacific Coast, the coyote among the Rocky-Mountain Indians. The human forms prevail in the Central and Eastern parts of the United States; here we hear not only of Mänäbus, but also of Glooskap among the Penobscot and the Malecite Indians, Nápi with the Blackfeet, the Old Man with the Crow-tribe, Inkloñmi among the Assiniboins, Nihañçan among the Arapaho and several others. I may the more easily refrain from adducing examples about these supernatural beings as they are treated at full length in an excellent monograph of A. van Deursen, to which I bid the reader resort, if he wishes more information about this subject.[2]

There is no difference between these conceptions whether relating to a human being or an animal. In the folktales of many peoples the same stories about persons who make a fool of others or who are outwitted themselves, are told indiscriminately about clever persons, giants or animals. Hence Mänäbus is in this respect not different from the Coyote. But there may be slight variations in the character attributed to him; in one place he may be more dignified, in another however a more depraved type of mischief-maker.

---

[1] Skinner-Satterlee, Folklore of the Menomini-Indians in Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History XIII (New York 1915) p. 246 sqq.

[2] Der *Heilbringer*, Eine ethnologische Studie über den Heilbringer bei den nordamerikanischen Indianern (Groningen 1931).

The picture, drawn of the Coyote by Alexander, may be taken as an example of the other kindred types. He says then [1]: In multitude of stories he is represented as contemptible — deceitfull, greedy, bestial, with an erotic mania that leads him even to incest, often outwitted by the animals whom he endeavours to trick, without gratitude to those that help him; and yet, with all this, he is shown as a mighty magician, reducing the world to order and helping man with innumerable benefactions, perhaps less the result of his intention than the indirect outcome of his own efforts to satisfy his selfish appetite. It is impossible to regard such a being as a divinity, even among those tribes who make him the great demiurge; it is equally out of the question to regard him as a hero, for his character abuses even savage morals. In general he resembles the Devil of Mediaeval lore more than perhaps any other being —, the same combination of craft and selfishness, often defeating its own ends, of magic powers and supernatural alliances.»

We are tempted to say: he is a coarse Loki, for the characteristics attributed to the Coyote fit on the whole very well into the image of the Scandinavian trickster. Before making a comparison between Loki and the North-American corresponding mythical beings, it will be advisable to get a better insight into the structure of the latter. Again I wish to quote Alexander[1], who calles him »a being who is at once a demiurge, a magical transformer and a trickster, both clever and gullible. In some tribes the heroic character, in some the trickster nature predominates; others recognize a clear distinction between the myths in which creative acts are ascribed to this being and the folk-tales or fictions, in which his generally discreditable adventures are narrated».

---

[1] L. c. p. 142.

As a culture-hero he even often acts in the still more elevated rôle of Creator. The feats told about him are:

1. The setting in order of the shapeless first world and the conquest of its monstrous beings, who are usually transformed.
2. The prime rôle in the theft of fire, the sun or daylight.
3. The restoration of the world after the flood.
4. The creation of mankind and the institution of the arts of life.

If we compare these highly beneficial qualities of such a culture-hero, we are induced to ask: is it possible that he can be at the same time such a contemptible being, revelling in adventures of the most compromising kind? And the answer will be ready at hand: as he appears in the traditions of to-day, he seems to be the result of a long and complicated development, melting religious conceptions of utterly different origin. Dr. Van Deursen who starts from the standpoint of the culture-hero, points out that he is an intermediary being between gods and men, that he is not the object of any veneration and that he is often represented as an animal. But there are also different historical elements in the traditions about him, reminiscences of a former hero, chief, shaman or prophet. With regard to the curious mixture of the culture-hero and the trickster, Van Deursen contents himself with the following very prudent remark: The »Heilbringer» appears often in the mixed rôle of an altruistic culture-hero, of a shaman and of a trickster; at one moment he acts as a helper of mankind, at another he sinks down to degradating acts.[1]

---

[1] L. c. p. 298.

But how are we to understand the astonishing fact that a low-minded trickster and a beneficiant culture-hero can dwell together in one and the same personage? It is quite true, that the tradition, as it is now told, shows him as a figure that exercises a great influence upon all kind of tales and jokes. He is, as Van Deursen styles it, a »Konzentrationsfigur»; we might say the funnel into which the scattered elements of popular lore are gathered. There are, indeed, several motives, current in almost all parts of the globe, that form a part of the cycle of the culture-hero only with the North-American Indians, whilst elsewhere they are told of animals or human beings, that have no particular relation to religious representations. It is obvious, as Prof. C. C. Uhlenbeck has remarked [2], that in many respects these oral traditions have an unmistakable literary character. The heaping up of funny stories about tricksters and outwitted numskulls on the North-American »Heilbringer» shows that people are on confidential terms with him; he is their equal and their companion in all the trifles of every day life and we may compare him in this respect — and with all restrictions due to a comparison in a field like this — with the fox of European, the kantjil of Indonesian or Abu-Nuwas of Arabian tradition. Every new tale, invented or imported from elsewhere, every remarkable accident or experience, will be transferred to Raven and Coyote and it is quite impossible to make use of this material for the study of the religious phenomenon itself.

Still the fact remains, that he is at the same time a culture-hero and a trickster. The Indians consider their Mänäbus in this double aspect; still they do not regard him only in the light of the trickster-type. They speak of him rather as the hero and while they laugh heartily at his misadventures and enjoy the fun, they nevertheless specify that Mänäbus was foreordained by a power greater than himself to suffer and play pranks.[1] If we speak of a debasement of the original culture-hero into a rather discredited person, we are making a distinction between the conception of a lower and a higher order, that need not be the same as with the North-American aborigines. It is better not to call it a debasement but a displacement of the centre of gravity; the elements belonging to the type of the culture-hero are not liable to be increased: the world and its inhabitants have been created, cultural goods have been acquired, magical science has been revealed to mankind. On the other hand people's fancy about the possible successes or discomfitures of a trickster is wellnigh inexhaustible and this stock of traditions may be augmented continually. This is, however, of only secondary importance, for it is an undeniable fact, that from the very beginning the culture-hero as well as the trickster are present in the conception of this supernatural being.

---

[1] L. c. p. 380.

[2] In a review of Van Deursen's book in Tijdschrift van het Koninklijk Nederlandsch Aardrijkskundig Genootschap 2d Series XLVIII (1931), p. 1114.

It may seem much more »logical», when the contradictory parts of this complex conception are divided over two distinct persons. With the Iroquois tribes a clear dualism exists between the twin-children of Ataentsic one is good and creates all profitable things, whilst the other thwarts him as much as he can. In the creation-myths one makes all the useful animals, the other however the nuisable and dangerous creatures as serpents, wolves, bears and panthers. This, however, is a conception to be found among many other peoples also; in Melanesian mythology there is a good being Qat and a malevolent one Marawa.[1] In a previous chapter I have quoted the story, how Qat made human beings from a dracaena-tree; Marawa however tried to do the same, but he used the tavisoviso: he worked at them six days also and set them up, and beat the drum for them and gave them life as Qat had done for his. But when he saw them move he dug a pit, covered the bottom of it with cocoa-nut fronds, and buried his men and women in it for six days. Then when he scraped off the earth with his hands to view them, he found them all rotten and stinking; and this was the origin of death among men. Such is the story told in the Bank's Islands; elsewhere the details may be different, but the underlying conception remains the same. On the Leper's Island the benevolent being Tagaro creates edible fruit, human beings that walk erect and that dwell in houses; his opponent Suqe, however, makes fruits bitter and men in the shape of pigs who sleep in the trunks of sago-palms.

---

[1] The last sentence quoted from Skinner and Satterlee, Menomini Folklore in the Anthropological Papers of Americ. Museum for Natural History XIII, 3 (1915) p. 236.

Where a clear dualism forms the principal feature of a religious system, we may expect that the opposition of good- and evilminded supernatural beings in the creation-myths is equally well known; in fact, European folk-lore has a profusion of tales about God and the Devil creating the world and its inhabitants. I shall refrain from adducing examples, because they are accessible in the collection Natursagen of O. Dähnhardt.

We may, perhaps, feel a certain inclination to consider this dualistic conception as the result of a later development, when the contradiction of such widely diverging characters in the same being became insupportable to a more enlightened mind. But I fully agree with Van Deursen, that both conceptions, the dualistic as well as the monistic, may be equally old and that it lies involved in the idea of the culture-hero itself, when his development follows one line or another.[1] Even in a dualistic system as that of the Bank's Islands Qat is not exclusively a benevolent creator; Codrington says about him that he is »good-natured, only playfully mischievous and that he thoroughly enjoys the exercise of his wonderful powers». And just as in America the Melanesian Qat is the central figure of a cycle of stories which vary in different parts of the islands of the Bank's group. A certain ambivalence of character seems to be inherent with this type of the culture hero.

---

[1] *R. H. Codrington,* The Melanesians (Oxford 1891) p. 155 sqq.

There is assuredly no reason to regard the trickster as a mythological character of later origin than the culture-hero, as Lowie remarks[2]; it is even possible that he is an older type of character in a given mythology than a properly so-called culture-hero, and then, as with the Assiniboins, the buffoon-type may prevail, although the sending out of the earth-diver birds, the theft of summer, the instruction in the killing and skinning of the buffalo and the allotment of dances to various animals with orders to pass them on to mankind, may be attributed to him. In such a case the benefactions are not always given in an altruistic spirit, but only because the culture-hero wants to supply his own needs.[3] In the Raven-cycle he liberates the sun, not because he pities mankind, but because he desires it.

As a creator of all possible beings and things, nuisable as well as obnoxious he may be thought to participate of both. Primitive man did not imagine a creator of supreme goodness, for he knew well enough that nature showed him a double face and that in man himself the same conflict was to be felt. The opposition of life and death was present in his mind; still he was persuaded that both life and death were in a constant interrelation and that in fact the mythical spheres of both could not be divided. In many religions death is not regarded as the abnegation of life, but rather as a higher potential form of life.

---

[1] L. c. p. 373.

[2] *R. Lowie*, Journal of American Folklore XXII (1909) p. 431.

[3] *F. Boas*, Journal of American Folklore XXVII (1914) p. 395.

The dualistic conception of the universe prevails almost everywhere and reveals itself in many different forms. The opposition between life and death may be paralleled by that between heaven and earth or by that between the two sexes. It has its reflexion in social institutions based upon a dualistic principle as well as in typical products of mythological speculations. Twin-gods as the Dioskouroi or hermaphroditic beings as those from which the cosmos in many religions is supposed to evolve belong to the same religious sphere.

This polarity is the essential feature of the culture-hero in several primitive religions. It does not matter, if it is expressed by opposing two supernatural beings belonging to different spheres of activity; it may be thought to exist as well in one single being. Then the religious phenomenon is particularly interesting, because the contrasting qualities cause a tension in the conception of the culture-hero, that may be of the utmost importance for its development on a higher level of civilisation. As an example the Greek Hermes may be mentioned, who originally belongs to this same category.[1]

The culture-hero is not a god, but only a supernatural being. Among his characteristics Van Deursen mentions that he is a mediator between the gods and men. He is not the object of special veneration. As a creator he is of minor importance in as much as he arranges the world and institutes a cosmic order. If he plays the rôle of a creator, it is commonly done by moulding the world after the deluge. With this conception of North-American Indians the representations of the Melanesians are in perfect accordance. When Qat is said to create he is adding only to the furniture of the world in which he was born, where there were already houses and canoes, weapons, ornaments, products of cultivated gardens and of such arts of life as the natives possessed when they were first visited by the Europeans.[1] But as a mediator between heaven and earth he participates of both and the contradictory elements of the cosmic duality have left their imprint on the conception of the culture-hero himself.

---

[1] Cf. *J. P. B.* de *Josselin* de *Jong*, De oorsprong van den goddelijken bedrieger, in mededeelingen der Kon. Akademie van wetenschappen te Amsterdam, Afd. Letterkunde deel 68. Serie B, N:o 1 (Amsterdam 1929).

This religious idea is well-nigh universal. The dualistic view on the world and its phenomena is so very self-evident, that it imposes itself upon the primitive mind. But the forms in which this fundamental conception is realised, are widely different. It depends upon the mental disposition of the people, upon its social institutions, upon the height of its civilisation and the influences that have given new impulses, which particular form the conception invests. Where a dissociation has taken place between two different beings, most commonly regarded as twins, the development leads to quite different results than where culture-hero and trickster are united in the same person. Hence we may expect to find at the last stage of historical evolution such very different beings as e.g. a benevolent culture-hero nearly indistinguishable from the Supreme God, a demiurge strongly in opposition to the heavenly powers, a messenger and mediator between god and man, a kind of devil counteracting the creator in all possible ways, a mere trickster who is only the hero of comical stories and not to forget such a highly complicated figure as the Heilbringer of the North-American Indians.

It is therefore in many cases exceedingly difficult to point out the culture-hero type as the original form of a deity in a religion that has had a rich and variegated development. When we find only the conception of a mere trickster left, obviously at this stage it would be impossible to attribute any religious meaning to it as a culture-hero. It may be very difficult to prove that he once has been of more importance than a hero of amusing tales. The fox of European folklore, on the other hand, is not an original culture-hero, because he executes tricks told elsewhere of such a supernatural being. It will be clear that it is extremely dangerous to prove or to reject the explanation of a deity belonging to a higher developed religious system as a culture-hero, only by confronting it with the well-testified types of ethnologic literature. The presence of some remarkable elements does not prove identity nor does the absence of others disprove it. It is more or less a question of intuition, by which we must be led to the insight, that such a divinity by its explanation as an original culture-hero becomes more intelligible to us in as much as different elements, that formed a puzzling contrast, may be understood as the opposite aspects of one single religious conception.

---

[1] Cf. *Codrington* l. c. p. 155.

We may now return to the Scandinavian Loki. But since the historical sources are scanty and Loki's character is not easily to be defined, I think it advisable first to consider two other specimens of the culture-hero: the Greek divinities Prometheus and Hermes.

3. Greek parallels of Loki

A comparison between Loki and Prometheus lies near at hand. The bound titan fettered to a rock in the Caucasian mountains is a perfect counterpart of Loki punished in an analogous way for the murder of Baldr. In his famous treatise on the Ragnarok Axel Olrik has shown the near relation between the myth of his punishment and the local tradition about the giant of Elbrus and he is of opinion that the Greek myth is a borrowing from the Caucasian legend. About the question how we have to explain Prometheus' character as the robber of the fire, Olrik answers, that he as such a culture-hero certainly belongs to a primitive stratum of Greek religion; it is only his punishment in Mount Caucasus that ultimately goes back to the legend of the Elbrus-giant. Since the latter was a robber of water (in later development of the water of life) a connection between him and Prometheus could easily have been made.[1]

It is not the place here to discuss Olrik's hypothesis about the legends of the fettered giant. I am not quite convinced that it is of Caucasian origin, nor that Prometheus, Amiran and Loki go back to this tradition. There may have been an independant origin as well and the local legends of the Caucasian mountains may be themselves deeply influenced by literary or semi-literary traditions. For my purpose this is however of subordinate importance: because the punishment of Prometheus, however moving it may be in its unrivalled dramatic character, does not constitute an integral part of his myth, nor does it shed light on the meaning of this being.

When Olrik calls him a culture-hero, he is evidently nearer to the truth than K. Bapp was, who wrote a long and learned dissertation about Prometheus in Roscher's Lexikon.[2] To this scholar the Greek god is closely bound up with the element of fire; he must really have been an older form of Prometheus. The fickle nature of the element is expressed by the character of the Greek god, vacillating between good and evil. In the same philosophical but at the same time thoroughly intellectualistic way Prometheus as the creator of mankind is explained out of his supposed original meaning of a fire-god: »In the same way as fire, warmth, soul, life were felt by the ingenuous realism of popular belief as well as by the older philosophers, as related, the god of fire and warmth could develop easily into a creator that bestows life to mankind»[1] The dualistic character of Prometheus is, of course, explained by a later development: originally he had been a benefactor of mankind, but for the devout worshippers of Zeus the god of higher antiquity was seen in the unfavourable light of a rebel and an intrigant.[2]

---

[1] *Axel Olrik*, Danske Studier 1913, p. 107—121.

[2] Roscher's Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie III, col. 3034 sqq.

Theoretical speculations of this kind are mere constructions in which a former generation of mythologists liked to indulge. It is unnecessary to prove the umprobability of Bapp's theory. To explain typical contrasts in a god's character as the results of subsequent development is in most cases a proof, that the scholar has not been able to arrive at a conception of the divinity, in which both opposite qualities are reconciled as different aspects of one single religious representation.[3]

The real character of Prometheus is evident, as soon as we compare him with the North-American Mänäbus, Raven or Coyote. He is a very typical example of a culture-hero and the principal motives, Van Deursen has pointed out in the myths about this supernatural being, may be found also in the Greek Prometheus.

1. He is a kind of creator, but in fact more a renovator after a deluge has destroyed the world. According to

---

[1] Col. 3050—3051.

[2] A similar case is the myth of Salmoneus; first he was a divinised hero who caused the thunderstorm to rise, afterwards he was chastised by Zeus because he would have imitated the supreme god, cf. S. Reinach, Cultes, Mythes et Religions II, p. 166.

[3] I do not think it necessary, after all that has been said in the previous pages, to explain why I can not accept that Loki and Prometheus have been originally fire-demons. The reasons, adduced by *L. von Schroeder* in his Arische Religion are not convincing and especially his treatment of the Scandinavian Loki is quite insufficient.

different authors Prometheus is the creator of the first human couple, moulded by him out of water and earth (Apollodor and Plotin). When Zeus would destroy the men of the Bronze Age, Prometheus gave to his son Deucalion the advice to construct a chest and to embark in it with Pyrrha after having stored it with provisions.

2. The culture-hero procures valuable things for mankind. As the robber of fire Prometheus is a typical form of the culture-hero and it is a serious mistake to consider him as a deification of the element of fire on account of his having stolen it from the gods. Sometimes it is said, that he has recovered it after it had been hidden by Zeus. Bapp translates this myth in the following way: »the beneficiant activities of fire remained intact even after the deluge». This is, at any rate, a very unpoetical interpretation of the myth; I think it more likely that this isolated variant reflects the idea, that the culture-hero is not the original creator but only the remodeller of the world after the great flood.
3. He is an inventor of useful acquirements. Prometheus is sometimes considered as an educator of mankind; he has invented the alphabet, he is called a grammarian and dialectician, also an astrologer[1] Although these details certainly belong to a more sophisticated age, it is not unlikely that he has been supposed to be the inventor of such highly civilised accomplishments, because he already had been known as the god who taught to men e.g. magic properties.
4. Of the utmost importance, however, is his dualistic character: at the same time benevolent and helpful, but also a deceiver and a rebel. His antagonism to Zeus

---

[1] Col. 3077.

may be the cause that his hybris against the chief god has been aggravated into the most heinous act, Prometheus ever had committed. But this is probably the reflection of later philosophical interpretation, that wanted to emphasize the terrible conflict between the superhuman hero and the gods.

5. His position between gods and men may be compared with that of the culture-hero. In this connection we have precious testimony in one of Hesych's glosses: *Ithas; ho tōn Titanōn kèruks Promètheus.*

I think no more proofs will be wanted.[1] The clever divinity, whose name means forethought, demiurge and herold of the pre-Olympian gods, is unmistakebly a typical form of the culture-hero. But he is thwarted in his career by the all-pervading superiority of Zeus. It is only his rôle as a robber of the celestial fire and as an actor in the drama of the deluge, that he has been remembered by later generations. Struck by awe for the holiness of Zeus the worshippers of this god considered Prometheus not in the first place as a benefactor of mankind, but as a reckless rebel against the majesty of the chief-god. His punishment was the result of this new interpretation; ungrateful man did not reject the precious gift Prometheus had bestowed upon him, but it loaded all its evil consequences upon the infortunate hero who was nailed to Mount Caucasus.

---

[1] It is hardly necessary to add that I reject the explanation offered by S. Reinach in his Cultes, Mythes et Religions III, pp. 68—91. that Prometheus is the later anthropomorphic form of an original eagle. that brings fire to mankind. If he objects that other hypotheses are necessarily erroneous, if they do not explain the complete religious phenomenon (p. 89 footnote 3), the same may be said with regard to his own theory. But, moreover, the idea that the fettered Prometheus might be compared with the eagle fixed to the front of the Greek temples and other buildings, seems to me utterly impossible, especially because the idea of punishment in this case must be considered as a later interpretation of the bound Prometheus, who obviously should have been represented fettered only because the eagle was fastened to the temple wall. I am unable to understand how a religious (or even mythological) conception may have originated in this purely accidental way. In another place of this same book (II, pp. 171—172) he compares the torture of Prometheus with that of Tityos and supposes that they both go back to an image, representing the Titan, when he was struck down by Zeus and his corpse was left to the eagles; this is indeed a much more plausible explanation.

In some respects Hermes is still a better representative of the dualistic culture-hero. The son of Zeus and Maia is placed in a near relation to the underworld as well as to heaven. He is a mediator between god and man, belonging to both worlds at the same time. He is moreover dualistic in more than one respect. His hermaphroditism is the expression of his sexual ambiguity; but in the sphere of ethics we observe the same character because he is at the same time a benefactor and a deceiver. He is the inventor of the art of fire-making and of a new musical instrument; this clearly belongs to the nature of a culture-hero. But much more interesting is the fact that he is a typical trickster, many a time degrading himself to a clown, and moreover, like his American-Indian brother Coyote he is a very impudent seducer of women, being intricated in about thirty different erotical adventures. Moreover his intimate relation to the powers of life and death is most likely mainly a specialised form of his dualistic position between the celestial and the chthonic powers. Hence his rôle as a psychopompos, which at the same time proves his position as a kind of servant of the real gods; hence also his relation to the powers of fertility and lastly the sacrifices offered to him in the cult of the Hermes Chthonios.

No more need be said about Hermes, whose character of a culture-hero and trickster is clearly exposed in the above mentioned paper of de Josselin de Jong. It becomes, however, evident from the fact that both this god and Prometheus show the particular traits of this religious conception, that at the end of historical development the results may be utterly different. Of course, we are not entitled to say that the Prometheus, as he appears in the classical age of Greece, is a culture-hero; he has become the hero of a well-defined mythological tale and he has lost accordingly many a feature, that probably at an older stage of the religious belief more sharply characterised him as the culture-hero. From the examples, adduced from ethnological literature as well as from the Greek traditions, we may conclude that this kind of semidivine beings is very liable to become the central-point of epic cycles. But since the culture-hero himself shows a marvellous versability, these cycles may develop themselves in very different directions and even gradually lose all palpable contact with the original conception.

4. Loki as a culture-hero

The explanation of Loki as a culture-hero has been proposed by both von der Leyen and Axel Olrik. I have had the opportunity of mentioning it; now we will have to support it with fresh, and as I believe convincing evidence. The proofs for this opinion have been hitherto those myths, where Loki indeed is told to have made or stolen such things as might be called culture-goods. He is the inventor of the fishing-net. He has stolen the Brísingamen and other useful objects. He has been caught as a salmon and in this fish a spark of the heavenly fire may have been concealed. H. Celander rejects this opinion and his arguments are worth considering. For as he says[1], although Loki often steals different objects, these are never, properly speaking, such typical cultural acquirements as a culture-hero commonly is said to give to mankind. Elsewhere[1] he argues that the myth of the Brísingamen is an ordinary folk-tale and that the story of the capture of the salmon ultimately goes back to a Christian legend. Although I am not of the opinion, that Celander is right in this explanation, I readily agree that both myths are very frail supports for a hypothesis about Loki's character as a culture-hero. We may add, that even the invention of the fishing-net is not sufficient to prove this characteristic.

---

[1] Lokes mytiska ursprung p. 116.

But I get the impression, that scholars have rather arbitrarely restricted the religious phenomenon of the culture-hero to the acquirement of certain important cultural goods. Now we have seen that such a supernatural being in those religions, where we find it best preserved, is very composite and may present itself in widely different shapes. I have insisted upon the necessity to consider this phenomenon in its totality and especially to detect the central ideas that are connected with it. A comparison with cognate divinities in other religious systems may help us to make a clear distinction between the fundamental character and the accessory details.

I may begin with the discussion of the comparison, made by Haggarty Krappe[2] between Prometheus, Hephaistos, the Celtic Lug, the Scandinavian Loki and Lucifer. He mentions the following points:

1. A divine or semi-divine being falls into disfavour with the powers that be (Prometheus, Hephaistos, Loki, Lucifer, Typhon), because.
2. He is guilty of rebellion against the said all-wise and of course allgood powers (Prometheus, Hephaistos, Loki, Lucifer, Typhon).

---

[1] Danske Studier 1914, p. 84.

[2] The Science of Folklore (London 1930) p. 333.

3. He is hurled down from the heavenly abodes (Hephaistos, Lucifer, Typhon).
4. His fall explains the peculiar fact that he is limping (Hephaistos).
5. He is lame, though a different cause is given (Wayland).
6. He is identified with volcanic activities underground and earthquakes (Prometheus, Hephaistos, Loki, Typhon).
7. He is banished from the dwellings of the gods and fettered on a lonely rock (Prometheus, Loki, Lucifer).
8. He is a fire-god and master-smith (Prometheus, Hephaistos, Lug, Loki, Wayland).
9. He is fabled to be relieved of his chains in the last days when the end of the world is impending (Loki, Lucifer).
10. He is a demiurgos, the inventor of many useful arts which he taught to man (Prometheus, Hephaistos, Lug, Loki, Wayland and Lucifer according to the tenets of certain gnostic sects).

Such a juxtaposition of different divine beings, characterised by common features, is exceedingly useful. But it seems to me that Haggarty Krappe is not very careful in the choice of the points of comparison and that as a consequence, the common character of these divinities does not become clear. He produces as different features such that really belong together as the succeeding stages of one single phenomenon (1, 2 and 3), or he puts as independant motives variants of the same item (3 and 7). Other peculiar traits are too sporadical to deserve much attention in this connection (4 and 5 are moreover variants of the same idea). Finally he adds such details, that possibly do not belong to the original conception and may be due to external influence (6, 7 and 9 with regard to Loki). The result is a rather disorderly combination of divinities that may belong partly to a similar religious representation and partly to quite a different religious sphere although they show some minor similarities.

The most prominent feature of Loki is his mischievous character. He is a typical trickster, amusing himself with teasing the other gods and sometimes contriving to do serious damage. In most cases, however, he is obliged to repair it. Moreover he does not act so from pure malevolence, on the contrary he often has the best intentions, but it turns out bad. If in one myth he is a very harmless mischief-maker, in other cases he is going so far as to appear in the rôle of a sworn foe of the gods. It is probable, that in many respects the latter traditions are due to a later development; still we must not conclude that originally he only has been an inoffensive joker. Loki then is a culture-hero not in as much as he procures useful things for mankind, but especially in his predominant character of a trickster.

It need not be said that this is not sufficient to prove the thesis that he indeed has been from the very beginning a culture-hero, for such a being can not be merely a trickster. But now those particularities that are found elsewhere as the constitutive elements of the culture-hero are of special interest. It even seems to me, that the fact that he is sometimes the thief of divine objects (the Brísingamen, the apples of rejuvenation) or that he invents a useful art (the making of the fishing-net) gets an increased interest, because it fits into the conception of Loki as a culture-hero and a trickster.

Like several of his colleagues he is in a very unstable position between the world of the gods and the demons. He in fact belongs to both, although the Scandinavian conception clearly lays stress on his divine character. But it can not be said that he is a full-blown god, he has more particularly the characteristics of a servant and a messenger, especially in those myths where he is the companion of

Thor. The strong resemblance with Hermes will at once become evident.

These are all characteristic features, that belong to Loki as he appears in the numerous myths told about him, or in other words, that are essential to this divinity according to the conception, the last ages of paganism and the ensuing ages of literary elaboration had about him. But perhaps we may be so fortunate as to find in some few hidden corners the dim reminiscences about a culture-hero in a more dignified sense and above all as an element of religious belief. Now we are led to the opinion, that accidental features mentioned in our literary sources and sometimes very difficult to understand, are really curious relics of a more original conception. The culture-hero belongs to different spheres of the universe and is often regarded as a dualistic being, even as bisexual. The same is told about Loki: he appears sometimes as a woman and even gives birth to children. I have discussed the possibility that this characteristic stood in some connection with the conception of a deity of fertility, although I did not venture to consider him exclusively as such. As soon as we explain him as a culture-hero this peculiar side of Loki becomes clear. For these supernatural beings are indeed supposed to promote fertility. Finally we have observed that Loki is closely related to the underworld (Hel, Fenrir); again we may point to the fact, that Hermes shows the same remarkable connection with the realm of death.

When so many details, that are at first sight incompatible with each other, fit in so remarkably well into the conception of the culture-hero, we are entitled to accept this explanation. Where there was only contradiction and want of coherence, we now see a perfect unity. The scattered pieces of mythological lore have been readjusted into a pattern that does justice to the meaning of each single detail. Axel Olrik could only see in the different Scandinavian traditions about Loki the reflexion of three or four divine beings, that originally were quite independant. An explanation however, that succeeds in demonstrating the unity in the bewildering diversity of conceptions, must be preferred because it is more simple and more convincing.

From this point of view I wish once more to consider Loki's relation to Othin. Axel Olrik has pointed out, that the myth about Othin stealing the mead of Suttung belongs to the same kind of stories as those current about Loki and he is of opinion that it goes ultimately back to a culture-hero myth about the origin of water.[1] Although this is by no means sure, the idea that Othin in traditions of this kind may be called a »stamfar», that is the divine ancestor, who is at the same time a culture-hero, seems to me fairly well founded. Then Othin and Loki are, at any rate, in this respect supernatural beings that belong to the same sphere of activities. The fóstbræðralag between them may be the expression of this partial identity.

Now in those primitive myths that told about a culture-hero, there was commonly one single person, Mänäbus or the Coyote. If there were two they were placed in some sort of contradictory position, the one being a benefactor, the other a malevolent being. We may adduce as an example the Iroquois cosmogony, where a heavenly woman is said to give birth to the twins Flint and Sapling. The latter one, better known as Yoskeha, is the real demiurge and earthshaper, he is too the spirit of life and of summer. But Flint, or Tawiscara, is an imitator and trickster, he makes malevolent beings and he is the spirit of wintry forces. Among their creative acts the most important is the moulding of man; this is the work of Sapling and when Flint tries to imitate him, he only succeeds in shaping monsters and this is why he is bannished to the underworld.[2]

---

[1] Festskrift Feilberg p. 578.

[2] *Hartley Burr Alexander*, North American Mythology p. 36 sqq.

The antithesis shows itself in different ways: one thwarts or deceives the other; they are quarelling or they are active in different ethical spheres, one doing good and the other evil. Whilst the real culture-hero intends to bestow immortality on man, the other contrives in allotting death to him.[1]

Generally speaking, there is a certain correspondance with the divine pair Othin-Loki. For Othin is certainly rather the positive, and Loki the negative side of the culture-hero type. This is already evident in the tales about their robberies: Othin steals the mead from the giants and for the benefit of mankind, but Loki on the contrary steals Iðunn from the gods to deliver her into the power of the demons. This is, indeed, exactly the contrast between the culture-hero and the trickster-deceiver. There are, however, scarcely any indications that there has been a direct opposition between Othin and Loki, for Loki is never acting with intention to thwart Othin in one of his pursuits.

Othin and Loki do not form a pair of quarrelling twins like Flint and Sapling. The reason may be that the cosmogonic myths, where Othin and Loki play a rôle, are nearly totally absent, perhaps because they have remained in a rudimentary state, more likely because they have been superseded by others. In fact, at the side of the myth about Ymir there is hardly any place left for the creative action of Othin. We know the creation-myth of Askr and Embla about him, to which we will return presently. In his Gylfaginning Snorri says about Alfaðir: Hann smíðaði himin ok jǫrð ok lopt ok alla eign þeira; but it is very improbable that this represents a heathen tradition; it is at any rate more likely that Alfaðir-Othin is here described according to the image of the Christian God. This becomes quite evident from the immediately following sentence, a curious mixture of heathen and Christian motives: hann gerði manninn ok gaf honum ǫnd þá, er lifa skal ok aldri týnask, þótt líkamr fúni at moldu eða brenni at ǫsku; ok skolu allir menn lifa, þeir er rétt eru siðaðir ok vera með honum sjálfum, þar sem heitir Gimlé, en vándir menn fara til Heljar ok þaðan í Niflhel.

---

[1] Cf. e.g. *Gifford*, Journal American Folklore XXXVI, p. 301 sqq; *Van Deursen*, Der Heilbringer p. 167, 177 and 317; *F. Boas*, Journa Am. Folklore XXX, p. 486—491.

According to the Scandinavian traditions Othin is not the creator of the universe, but only of mankind. And the myth telling about Askr and Embla, is presented in a form, that is difficult to reconcile with the type of the culture-hero. Olrik contends that the triad, to which this creation is ascribed, is unparalleled in Teutonic religion, but finds its exact counterpart in Celtic myths, where it is told e.g. that Lug, Dagde and Ogmios together go to the world of demons in order to recover the harp of Dagde. Then Olrik explains this curious similarity by the hypothesis that this Celtic triad has been adopted by Germanic tribes living in the region of the Lower Rhine, and that it has been carried by a cultural current to Scandinavia, probably under the same circumstances as the transmission of Othin himself would have taken place.[1] I have expressed my reasons, why I reject this latter view, in my paper on Othin.[2] But here a not less serious objection must be made: the creation myth mentions as the divine triad: Óðinn, Hœnir and Lóðurr and I have in a former chapter (§ IV a) stated that we are not entitled to consider Lóðurr as the same deity as Loki.

The meagre material of our sources does not permit us to get any definite representation of Othin and Loki as a couple of divine beings, acting as demi-gods, that mould men and animals or procure useful arts for mankind. Othin is too markedly a divinity of high importance, to show any clear traces of an older form as culture-hero. In the traditions about him we may detect two different layers: the original death-spirit and a divine creator.[1] But it is impossible to make out whether the culture-hero has gradually developed into a creative god, e.g. in harmony with the rise of his importance in the Scandinavian pantheon, or whether Othin originally has been a divine creator. In my eyes the first alternative is the most probable. I may call to mind my previous remarks about Othin (or Óðr), that one of his prominent characteristics has been fury or mental excitement, which is intimately connected with his intellectual quality as shown by the Old-Norse traditions.[2] This characteristic, however, is closely bound up with all kind of magical practices; his name is identical with the Latin *vates* and the Gallec *ouateis*, both meaning »prophet». Such a name then may have denoted the primitive magician and shamanic sorcerer and it is as such that the culture-hero not infrequently appears. We are inclined to accept this as the original meaning of Óðr or Óðinn. The demoniac character of Othin is especially the result of his belonging to the underworld and the world of the gods. This again connects him with several other culture-heroes. Conceptions, belonging properly to the venerated ancestor and to the subterranean realm of death, may have merged into the primitive culture-hero, whose creative activity was mainly based on his magic properties. The later evolution into the supreme lord of the gods has, of course, totally obscured this original character of Othin.

---

[1] Festskrift Feilberg p. 578—579.

[2] FF Comm., No. 94, p. 43 sqq.

Loki was in many respects his counterpart. He worked on a lower plane, and what he did was not to the benefit of mankind. Perhaps the rise of Othin's power had as consequence the gradual decline of Loki's. His character shows, at any rate, several marked agreements with that of Othin. But in him the trickster type predominates.

---

[1] Ibidem, p. 49.

[2] Ibidem, p. 45—46.

An explanation of the name Loki by means of a word *logi* »fire» or the verb *lûkan* »to close» is irreconciliable with this conception. There is, however, a curious likeness to the name of the Celtic god Lug. And the connection of both is not confined to names only. The Romans have compared Lug with Mercury, and since Wodan was translated in the same way, there must have been some connection between their characters. According to Caesar Lug was an inventor of all possible arts and with this conception the Irish traditions about this god tally fairly well. For here also he was the inventor of the old heathen meetings at certain fixed times; he has introduced into Ireland several amusements, horse-races and the game of chess or at any rate an analogous play called *fidchell.*[1] When Lug arrives with the Tuatha Dé Danand before the battle of Mag-Tured, this god, called *samildánach* »possessing many arts», gives an enumeration of his various abilities and we are again reminded of the Gaulish *omnium inventor artium.*

These are clearly qualities, that are characteristic of a culture-hero. The teaching of useful arts, the institution of religious rites are generally attributed to such divine powers. Lug was venerated as an important deity by the Gauls, as is proved not only by local names as Lugudunum, but also by the institution of the feast on the first of August in honour of the Emperor and the Majesty of the Empire, but in fact only continuing an old heathen festival on the same day in honour of Lug (the Irish *lugnasad*). There may have been, indeed, strong similarities between Lug and Wodan, as some scholars have pointed out.[2] This does not exclude the possibility of a close relation between Lug and Loki, in as far as the latter belongs to the same category of divine beings and bears a remarkably corresponding name. The deplorable state of Celtic traditions about their heathen beliefs makes it an unpromising task to compare Scandinavian deities with Celtic ones: when the former are not sufficiently clear to us, the latter will hardly help us in elucidating them. But when we confine ourselves within the borders of general observations, we may say with some confidence, that the analogous character of Lug, Loki and Othin is a valuable indication for the existence of a primitive deity, belonging to the type of the culture-hero, among peoples so closely related as the Celts and the Teutons. The moment, however, when historical sources begin to shed some light upon the religious conceptions of both peoples, we observe that these deities have developed far from their original meaning and that the development went in very different directions.

---

[1] D-Arbois de Jubainville, Le cycle mythologique irlandais p. 138.

[2] The argument of *Haggarty Krappe*, Mythologie Universelle p. 222, that his name is derived from the word *lugos* »raven» and that this reminds one of the Teutonic ravengod, is very frail, because

Hence if the similarity of the names Lug and Loki[1] might be explained as a proof for an original identity of these deities, we can not expect to find any strong resemblance between the Gaulish Lug and the Scandinavian Loki as they appear in the historical sources. But, of course, this does not prove that there could not have been one common original conception underlying both. Whenever we find the scattered fragments of a belief in a culture-hero among the variegated religious representations of later times, we may conclude from such erratic primeval boulders that they are indeed the last vestiges of by-gone ages, when a cruder and more primitive belief prevailed.

---

the etymology of Clitophon: *lougos* »raven» is rather doubtful (cf. *G. Dottin*, La langue gauloise p. 268).

[1] The different stems (u-stem and consonant stem) are probably no serious objection against the identification of both names.

CHAPTER XIII

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPTION OF LOKI

Not every myth about Loki, preserved by the Old-Norse literary monuments is in accordance with the original character of this deity, as we have tried to establish it in the previous chapter. Loki the instigator of Baldr's murder is quite a different personage from the friend of Othin or the companion of Thor. Whatever explanation of this god has been proposed, no scholar has arrived at such a conception, that all the tales about him were made intelligible by it. Ideas of later ages, stories of foreign origin have been separated from the rather incoherent mass of traditions, till at last there remained a less numerous but more coherent material tallying with the theories advocated by the investigators.

Now the later development of a religious conception is not simply an addition of new elements that originally do not belong to it. When a foreign tale is adopted and connected with an indigenous mythical figure, this is not done only because the tale was considered interesting and worth while recollecting. It was not connected arbitrarely with a mythical cycle, but there must have been reasons for doing so. Hence Christian traditions about Satan have not been the cause of Loki's development into a devilish being, but they were connected with this god, because he possessed already certain qualities, that made him particularly fit as a heathen representative of the Christian devil. The evolution of a religious conception may be certainly influenced by foreign conceptions, but the fact that such an influence has taken place must again be explained by motives lying in the original religious conception itself.

For a natural development, however, an indispensable condition is the persistence of a real belief in the deities, about whom the myths are told. This does not imply that the belief must be undisturbed, quite on the contrary, in many cases foreign influences may furnish new material for a richer growth of legends or myths and may even act as a stimulus to higher and nobler conceptions of the divine. But when a belief is annihilated by a foreign creed or relegated to the state of superstition, circumstances are exceedingly unfavourable for a natural growth of a religious conception. This is what has taken place in Scandinavia. At a certain period the heathen belief is dethroned by Christianity; its vestiges may have lingered on during many centuries in very remote places, the focusses of the cults have been dethroned and the intellectual part of the population, that is of the utmost importance for the elaboration of the mythological traditions, has abandoned the heathen belief. During the period of transition, perhaps one century or even more, there may have been a constant flowing in of Christian conceptions and legends into the decaying mythological system and as seems to be the case with the Vǫluspá, even give a higher meaning and a deeper sense to the pagan conceptions. But as soon as the vital force of heathendom is broken down, the mythological fancy must come to an end.

Such, however, has not been the case in Iceland. By the particular character of the skaldic poetry there has arisen a new and unexpected growth of mythological traditions. The use of kennings was firmly rooted in the heathen religious conceptions; in fact the majority of the poetical circumlocutions contain the name of a deity. Although during the first century after the conversion poets as a rule were not inclined to adopt such kennings, because they reminded one too much of the ancestral creed, that Christian priests had taught them to abhor and to depise, little by little they returned to the old custom and mythological kennings flourished as ever before.

These kennings presuppose a certain knowledge of the heathen myths, not only amongst the poets themselves, but also with the public that listened to'their compositions. We must accept some kind of uninterrupted tradition that linked the modern renaissance with the heathen past. This tradition must have been purely literal and antiquarian; there have, of course, always been people interested in the old traditions, especially in Iceland, so extremely fond of old lore. The poems could not be understood unless people possessed the clue to the often very intricate kennings. This is the reason why the heathen traditions did not fall into utter oblivion as elsewhere in the Teutonic world: in the literary circles, where poets might learn the difficult skaldic art, the particulars of the heathen belief were expounded in much the same way as classical mythology was taught in mediaeval convent-schools. When after a certain lapse of time the heathen traditions had become void of all religious meaning and were considered as curious tales from a distant past, there could be no danger anymore in using kennings with the names of the pagan gods; it might even appear as a new and attractive manner of poetical adornment, giving some antiquarian flavour to the old-fashioned style of poetry.

Then of course the mythological traditions were not simply collected and transmitted for the sake of explaining the old poems, but a new period of active interest for them set in. As soon as the poets made use of mythological kennings they would not restrain themselves from repeating the old ones, but they had to invent new circumlocutions. Hence they had to reflect on the traditions themselves and in those indeed not so very rare places where the real meaning was obscure they had to seek for a plausible explanation. This means again a new stimulus to the learned preoccupations of antiquarians, who tried to combine the scattered remains of heathen lore, to arrive at satisfactory interpretations, to readjust them into some kind of system. But as soon as this spirit is aroused, poetical fancy can not stand aloof; it too must participate in this work of revival of the old traditions. Taking their material as well from Christian legend as from classical stories, from popular tales and from their own imagination, the mythographers of this period extended the far too limited store of mythological traditions.

Hence we may distinguish three successive periods in the transmission of heathen myths. In the ages before the conversion there has been a natural unconscious growth of the traditions about the divinities. It goes without saying that there have always been thinkers and poets, who freely handled the mythological traditions, even without believing in them. But they lived in a society where the majority actually was convinced of the reality of the deities and of the trustworthiness of the myths told about them. Therefor the character of this period is that these myths must emanate from a living belief and consequently must be in harmony with the religious conceptions. But in as much as it was natural, the growth was wild and luxurious; there was but little disposition to systematisation and contradictory myths may have been current at the same time.

Next comes the period immediately after the conversion. The heathen traditions are preserved by those who have some interest in recollecting them. These are the learned antiquarians of this period, who have to furnish the knowledge for the right understanding of the old poetry.

They may be compared with the *filid* of the insular Celts, who likewise handed down the old traditions to posterity. If the traditions are sufficient to explain the kennings, they have only to be preserved, but if this is not the case, some attempt may have been made to eke out the material; this may be done by combining different traditions and by filling the gaps. If a kenning does not repose upon a known myth, it may lead to the invention of a tale apt to explain the kenning.

At the end of the 12th century poets are using more freely mythological kennings. This means a heightened interest in religious traditions. If the activity unto this time had only been of a preservative kind, now it becomes also creative. Mythographers more freely handle the old material and they are especially intent upon a systematisation of the very incoherent traditions. They, however, often misinterpret them, just like the poet who is »pillaging an antiquity of which he does not fully possess the secret». From the reciprocal action of poets and antiquarians new myths are added and old myths completely remodelled. Because nobody believes in them, they may be treated as purely literary traditions and it is unnecessary, even impossible to take account of the real meaning of the old religious conceptions. For the modern scholar the activity of this period is a very serious hindrance to right understanding; it is as if a screen were placed between the reliable traditions of the pagan time, by which they are in many cases utterly obscured.

The ideal task of the modern scholar is to make a clear distinction between the products of these periods, especially between those of the first and the third. The latter he may disregard as to their meaning and in most cases also reject as quite spurious. They may contain some details that are original and interesting, because they have not been preserved elsewhere; ordinarely they do not present such valuable information. Tales of this period abound in mythological names, that are mainly pure fancy. The thread Vartari by which Loki's lips are sewed together belongs to this category, likewise the names Lœðing, Drómi and Gleipnir for his fetters.

The tales, however, belonging to the heathen time, are very precious for our investigation. They contain reliable material, they reflect original conceptions, they may consequently help us in finding the religious belief underlying those myths. When we are certain to base our conclusions upon this part of the extant material, we may be convinced that we build on a solid foundation.

We get the impression that there are more spurious than reliable traditions. The majority of the myths told in the Snorra Edda are subject to this suspicion. Now here we find the most coherent information about them, written by a man who wishes to expound the old traditions before a public eager to get a comprehensive knowledge about them. Whereas the Eddic and skaldic poems in as far as they belong to the heathen time suppose the myths as known to everybody, Snorri wrote for those who wished to be taught. Hence his myths have the appearance of well ordered and intelligible stories, whilst the real reliable traditions are fragmentary and obscure. This makes it particularly difficult for us to abandon the guidance of Snorri and only to confine ourselves to the study of the old poems. Still we have met with several examples that Snorri's combination proves to be quite arbitrary and consequently must be rejected. It goes without saying that this characteristic of the prosaic Edda considerably diminishes its value as a first-rate source, and especially in those cases where we have to rely exclusively on its authority. The widely divergent opinions enounced by different scholars about the meaning of Old-Norse myths prove how extremely difficult it is to arrive at definite conclusions in this field of study, owing to the incompleteness and obscurity of the extant material.

Still it would be unwise to reject Snorri's testimony altogether. This is impossible in those cases where he gives the only information about a myth. Moreover he may have had access to far better and richer sources of old lore than is possible for us, who live so many centuries afterwards. His interpretations, sometimes betraying the narrow-minded conceptions of mediaeval learning, may in other cases be founded on a better understanding of the heathen traditions, which may be ascribed to the fact that he was an Icelander himself and that he lived only a couple of centuries after the breakdown of paganism. We must bear in mind also that too great a scepticism necessarily deprives us of a considerable part of the material and consequently makes it well-nigh impossible to draw a vivid picture of the heathen belief. It may be preferable to involve a certain amount of spurious traditions in our investigations to preclude the wasting of the slightest piece of useful evidence. Hence I am inclined to place the largest part of the later material on the same level of trustworthiness as the most venerable traditions of pagan times. At any rate this may be justifiable, when we want to know the character of the divinity about whom the myths are told, because even later literary inventions will follow generally the same paths trodden by the heathen poets.

When we try to collect the material about Loki that speaks in favour for our opinion, that he is a culture-hero and a trickster, we arrive at the conclusion that by far the greatest part of the myths of Loki are in perfect harmony with this conception. Only those stories that are generally regarded as due to foreign and Christian influence can not be reconciled with it. There are of course several contradictory tales about him. Can it be accepted e. g. that Loki in the same period may have been regarded as the friend of Othin, the servant of Thor, the father of Hel and of Sleipnir? I may then refer to the following passage of *Max Müller*[1]: »The poets of the Veda indulged freely in theogonic speculations, without being frightened by any contradictions. They knew of Indra as the greatest of gods, they knew of Agni as the god of gods, they knew of Varuna, as the ruler of all, but they were by no means startled at the idea that their Indra had a mother, or that their Agni was born like a babe from the friction of two fire-sticks, or that Varuna and his brother Mitra were nursed in the lap of Aditi.»

Moreover the myths themselves may be in full contradiction to each other. This will be particularly the case when they are told about a divinity who possesses at the same time the wholly different characters of a trickster and a culture-hero. When we find fault with such a lack of congruity, the fault is ours. We are always craving for logical coherence and complete harmony; we always expect to find a well-ordered system and every time we only find fragmentary and contradictory traditions, we are prone to suppose an original harmonizing form that has been destroyed by ill-favoured traditions of later times. Observers, however, of primitive peoples have frequently insisted on this character of their myths and religious conceptions. *Paul Radin* calls special attention to the »freedom of thought» among primitives and he says: »The same attitude is shown with regard to divergent versions of some of the more important myths of the tribe, the sacred ones, those referring to the origin of the clans, of death, of future life. In one instance when I obtained a very markedly divergent version of the most sacred myth of the tribe, the informant, in reply to my question as to why his version differed so much from the others, answered rather irritatingly »That is my way of telling the story. Others have different ways». That was all. No judgment was passed.»[1]

---

[1] Vedic Hymns I (The Sacred Books of the East XXXII) p. 242.

These preliminary remarks may pave the way for my attempt to give an explanation of the puzzling figure of Loki. He appears in the oldest sources as a very compound conception, although his general character is that of the trickster. On the whole he is not in direct opposition to the gods, for when he does make mischief to their damage he is compelled to repair it (cf. § X, i). The myths of Þjazi and Iðunn, of the giant-builder, of Andvari and of the Brísingamen belong to this category, although I am by no means willing to call them all old and original. But here is a traditional conception that has been continued unto the latest times of myth-making.

It would be as wrong to contend that those tales where Loki has a mischievous character, are to be considered as inventions of later ages. A trickster-type naturally is liable to transgress the line of demarcation between the admissible and the inadmissible. The trickster of primitive religions shows the same proclivity to wicked acts as *inn lævísi Loki.* The reason is obvious in those cases where he stands in contrast to a twin-brother of benevolent character; then the duality necessarily pushes him on to the opposite side. The relation between Othin and Loki, although quite obscure in its real meaning, makes it probable that a development of the same kind has taken place with him. But it is not imperative to start from thi supposition because the free mythopoetic fancy very easily may add mischievous tricks to a divinity that originally was quite harmless. The tale of Geirrøðr may illustrate this. Loki is a heinous traitor of the short-witted Thor, but nonetheless this character is not emphasized. He acted so because he was compelled to it by the giant who had made him a prisoner; this is evidently an excuse. Moreover he does not succeed at all, because Thor does not undertake the journey without magic objects that procure strength and because Thor conquers the giants. Finally he himself is described as a miserable being, clinging to the belt of the thundergod, when they pass through the river Vimur.

---

[1] Primitive man as a philosopher p. 56 f.

In the tale about the cutting of Sif's hair he acts as a naughty boy, and again he is forced to restore the damage he has done. Such a story shows clearly, that he sometimes may be the hero of very inoffensive and even childish tales. The same may be said about the myth of the wager between the dwarfs, immediately following the cutting of Sif's hair: it belongs to the same style. The Lokasenna shows him in clear opposition to the gods, but his flyting contest in itself is not sufficient to regard him as a foe of the gods: in many a festival-hall of heathen Scandinavians the same shower of abusing and insulting remarks might be poured upon the heads of the guests by a sharp-tongued individual, whose selfpossession was slackened by the mead. The remark of the Hymiskviða that Loki had done damage to the he-goats of Thor is open to serious distrust: elsewhere it is told that Þjalfi was the real culprit and moreover the sentence about the *goðmǫlugir menn* points to a later period of origin.

The character of a trickster extolls the mental capacities of such a person at the cost of his bodily strength. I have shown (§ X, 3) that Loki's companionship with Thor necessarily must have led to this conception. That is why Loki is described as a nimble being. The fact that he is said so often to be captured by the giants and to be overawed by the gods, is again an explanation for his bodily inferiority to both. We have no sufficient reason to call him an elfish being, only because he is described by Snorri as a person of small size.

He sometimes acts as messenger, e.g. in the Þrymskviða.

Although this poem in itself is certainly of late origin, this rôle is quite in agreement with the type of the culture-hero. This is proved by the Greek Hermes, who may furnish an interesting series of parallels with Loki. His relation to the underworld and to the powers of fertility, even his bisexual character, are explained by this side of his personality (cf. § X, 3 and 4). Traces of these conceptions, however, are only left in a few incidental remarks; the want of real myths may perhaps be explained by the greater predilection for trickster stories which caused other sides of his personality to fall into oblivion. A harmless trickster easily becomes a clown. Hermes sometimes plays the rôle of a buffoon and Loki does quite the same in that scandalous tale, where he succeeded in inducing Skaði to laugh. Those, who like *Kaarle Krohn*[1] explain this jest as an adaptation of a well-known popular tale (*Aarne-Thompson* 571) are certainly nearer to the truth than those who seek for a concealed mythical meaning; nevertheless the motive of the clownish Loki in itself may belong to the oldest attainable form of this god.

The same must be said of his many transformations. This is an essential characteristic of the trickster. Loki may appear as a salmon or a seal, as a mare or a falcon, as a fly or a flea; he may assume the outward forms of animals belonging to the three realms of nature. There is only one reason, why he in each case chooses a distinct shape and it must be admitted, that this reason is quite satisfactory: the shape he assumes is in perfect accordance with the aim he pursues. If he wants to conceal himself in the river, he becomes a salmon, but if he likes to fly through the air, he takes the shape of a falcon. As the mother of Sleipnir he must be a mare and to disturb a person by a painful irritation no better form could be adopted than that of an insect.

---

[1] Skandinavisk mytologi p. 177—178.

Hence there is no reason to seek for a special connection between Loki and fire, or water, or even the fly-god Beelzebub to explain those myths where he appears as an animal.

If we may call the trickster-type the negative side of the culture-hero, we must ask, if there are any traces left of positive manifestations as such. The connection with Othin makes it fairly probable, that we should not put our expectations too high: in the pair Othin-Loki the former is chiefly the culture-hero, the latter the trickster. It is, however, not certain that in the original conception the duality has been clear-cut and there are indeed some indications that both divinities are rather parallel than opposite phenomena. One might even be tempted to consider Othin as a kind of creator, Loki again as a divinity of a lower order, or rather as a culture-hero. The invention of the fishing-net is in itself not enough to stamp Loki as such, but in the light of our explanation some significance must be attributed to it, the more so because Loki is the only god about whom a myth of this kind is told. I am even of opinion that the myth, according to which the hammer of Thor owing to Loki's wickedness has too short a handle, may be placed on a par with those primitive stories about a trickster who thwarts the goodwilled intentions of a god.

This part of Loki's character is, indeed, obscured by the later profuse growth of the trickster-elements. The slight traces, however, left of an older and higher conception are very precious, and Axel Olrik, who approached the enigmatic figure of Loki from quite a different side, was likewise induced to pay special attention to the so-called Othin-Loki and to explain him as a tribal-hero.

A divinity as Loki has been, tends to a gradual debasement. The trickster type is much too human to remain in the same level as the gods. He acts too often as a contemptible rascal or as a ridiculous clown to maintain his divine character. The higher cultural niveau, to which the heathen Scandinavians raised themselves in the course of ages, necessarily implied a higher and nobler conception of the gods and compared with gods as Othin or Thor a being as Loki must lag behind. He was not deemed worthy to receive sacrifices; people did not pray to such a deity in hours of distress and sorrow. Whereas the names of lesser divinities like Skaði or Hǫrn are preserved in place-names, Loki has apparently never been the object of a public cult. Even in quite undisturbed pagan times Loki may have been degraded and as soon as a divinity is on this dangerous slope he must slide down deeper and deeper. During this period his character as a trickster remained virtually unchanged, but there clustered about him a greater mass of tales, where he acted as an impudent deceiver and buffoon. The small, sharp-witted but at the same time mischievous and cowardly Loki is the conception, that is in full harmony with such a development in malam partem. The ties that bound him to the realm of the underworld were tightened, but at the same time the unfavourable ideas of the world of the dead began to prevail. If Othin was gradually rising to the position of the Lord of heavenly Walhall, Loki on the contrary was degraded to Niflhel. He became the ally of the monsters that live outside the human world; as a lord of these infernal beings he might be called by a special term: Útgarðaloki (cf. § X, 3). If the heathen Scandinavians had developed some ideas about a final break-down of the world when giants and demons would conquer the gods, Loki may have taken his place among these foes of the cosmic order.

Here again it is difficult to make a clear distinction. For the Christian influence has decidedly turned Loki into a heathen counterpart of Satan. Often, perhaps too often, the missionaries were seeking for points of contact between the Christian and the pagan religious representations and then a superficial similitude would suffice as an identification. The contrast of Othin and Loki might be seen in the exaggerated form of Alfaðir and Útgarðaloki and then the comparison with God and Lucifer lies near at hand.[1]

Loki as a real devil may be due to Christian influence. His rôle in the myth of Baldr, in all probability the result of a later development, is an example of this new character. Likewise the tales about his being fettered in a subterranean cave, perhaps an imitation of legends about Lucifer, with whom Loki had an ominous resemblance of name. It is however of particular interest, that he has not received an important rôle in the drama of Ragnarǫk[2], because we may infer from it that at the time of the poet of the Vǫluspá Loki was not yet debased to the heathen representative of the devil. It is not unlikely that there have been current even heathen myths about a punishment inflicted on Loki, because it was not to be expected that he could play his tricks on the gods without being chastised for it. The sewing of his lips by the dwarfs, his persecution in the river are at any rate other examples, that besides his being fettered, may prove that the idea of punishment also may have been current in heathen times.

The belief, that he caused earth-quakes, is apparently of later origin. If, however, in heathen times people had experienced this natural phenomenon which they most likely had, then the trickster-god might have been thought responsible for it. The motive, however, is of too slight importance, to affect our view upon the real character of Loki, as I have developed it in the previous pages.[1]

---

[1] Of course I do not intend to say that Othin himself has ever been put on a par with the Christian God, but the notion of an Alfaðir is very close to the idea of the supreme god *sa er sólina hefir skapat* and here the difference with Christian conceptions is indeed very small (cf. *W. H. Vogt.* Vatnsdælasaga p. LXXII—LXXIII).

[2] In Vafþrúðnismál st. 18 Surtr is called the principal opponent of the gods: Vigríðr heitir vǫllr, er finnaz vígi at Surtr ok in sváso goð.

The last period is that of the mythographers in the 12th and 13th centuries. Surely a not important amount of the myths told by Snorri and his contemporaries have been invented or at any rate have attained definite shape in these ages. But on the whole they seem not to have changed the idea of the god himself and evidently it is this they were not able to do. They had a well-fixed type of Loki in mind, the same type as the old traditions showed them and in as much as they were only poets or learned antiquarians, they did not feel any necessity to remodel the type itself. The characters of the heroes of Homer are also established firmly and whatever later ages might add to their glory, a new conception of them lay beyond the scope of later poetical treatment.

Perhaps we might find one example of an attempt to explain Loki in a new and original way. The eating-contest in the hall of Geirrøðr shows us Loki as the opponent of Logi, and as I have shown in § V, 1 this implies that the author of this story supposed that Loki was also a kind of firegod. I do not know, if this author, who certainly did not invent the myth of Thor's visit to the home of Geirrøðr, but only remodelled and enlarged it, has explained Loki as a fire-god on the basis of a hap-hazard etymology or because the association of the devil and hell fire induced him to do so. At any rate the fire-nature of Loki appears

---

[2] The assertion of Miss Gras that this detail can not be reconciled with the explanation of Loki as an elfish spirit, is quite unfounded. Subterranean beings are often brought into connection with such phenomena and moreover in many tales an extraordinary force is attributed to them. Cf. the tale of the *huldre* that proves her strength by bending a horse-iron between her fingers or the legend of the dead king in the mountain who crushes an iron bar in stead of the finger he asked the human visitor to present to him.

for the first time on the last stage of the literary traditions about him and there is no indication whatever that he has ever been connected with this element. This proves the impossibility of the hypothesis that Loki originally has been a fire-demon, but it proves at the same time that there are no indications for Loki as a Scandinavian Prometheus: although a culture-hero, he seems not to have granted to mankind the valuable gift of fire.

I am at the end of my investigation. The way has been difficult and wearisome; the reader may perhaps sometimes have despaired ever of reaching the goal. But many theories had to be disputed and many details had to be thoroughly investigated. The rock, on which we more than once were in danger of shipwreck, was the irreliability of a considerable part of our material. Through the mind of a Christian a heathen conception must have been distorted. We may quote the words of the sage Mandanis to Onesikritos: It is impossible to explain philosophical doctrines through the medium of interpreters who know nothing of the subject. It is like asking water to flow pure through mud.

But in spite of this serious drawback of our in many respects indispensable sources, we have arrived at a solution of the problem by trying to find it, where we might expect that changes had been least at work. And this we found in the conception of the divinity, that has been unaltered during the different periods of historical development. The spirit animating the various acts of Loki must have been nearly the same. If we were able to find the central point of his personality, we might hope to find the clue of his enigmatic figure. I found it in his double character of a culture-hero and a trickster and I consider it as a proof of no small importance that nearly all the traditions about Loki may be explained as the natural results of this original conception.

LIST OF PROPER NAMES

Aegir 154, 171—172, 206—207.
Aestii 100.
Aetiological legends 153.
Agni 13, 289.
Aidan 75.
Äimätär 191.
Äkäätär 191.
Alcis 221.
Alexander, H. B. 257—258.
Alf 214.
Alfaðir 277, 295.
Alfrigg 130,132.
Ali 188—189.
Aloen meri 152, 159—160.
Alvaldi 38.
Alvíssmál 44, 67, 77.
Alǫg 130—131.
Amiran 266.
Andvaranautr 41—44.
Andvari 41—43, 61, 142—149, 209, 290.
Angrboða 75, 187—188, 198.
Aphroditon 221.
Ardshi Bordshi 34.
Asgarðr 65, 76—77, 81.
Asia Minor 163, 183.
Asir 73. 78.
Askr 28, 31, 33, 277—278.
Atharva Veda 197.
Attis 165.
Atys 164.
Aurora borealis 136—138.

Baldr 23, 151, 163—178, 185, 199, 217, 295.
Baldrs draumar 167—168, 179.
Bapp, K. 266—268.
Bárðr Snæfellsáss 214.
Baruch 107.
Bastian 87.
Beelzebub 194, 233, 246, 293.
Belit 194.
Beowulf 139.
Berlingr 130, 132.
Bialfi 119.
Biting louse 108—109, 113, 121.
Bjarkamál 44, 91.
Bjergmand 232—234, 247.
Boer, R. C. 56.
Brísingamen 26, 93, 95, 109, 121, 125—145, 150, 205, 271, 274, 290.
Brísingr 136.
Brísings girði 134—135.
Brokkr 93, 94, 98, 176, 224.
Brosinga mene 139.
Bugge, S. 12, 14, 139, 198.
Burr 28, 36.
Býleistr 11, 186—190, 193—195, 205.

Cahen, M. 193.
Casuistic tales 34.
Celander, H. 18—20, 27, 101, 111, 154, 207, 211, 214, 232—239, 271.
Chantepie de la Saussaye 15.
Christian influence 23—24, 152, 159, 182—183, 199, 214, 217, 223, 278, 282—283, 288.
Coyote 257, 259, 267, 270, 276
Creation-myth 29—34.
Culture-hero 16—18, 255—267.

Dagde 278.
Dagr 204.
Dellingr 212.
Deursen, A. van 256—265, 267.
Dioscuric gods 168.
Donar 55.

Draupnir 90—93.
Drómi 98, 287.
Dvalinn 130, 132.

Egill 85.
Eilífr Goðrúnarson 24, 56, 58, 61—65, 186.
Einarr Gilsson 44.
Eiríksmál 196.
Eisen, M. 122—123.
Eldbjør 243—244.
Eldir 173.
Embla 28, 31, 277—278.
Emerson, E. R. 17.
Esthonian tale 102—111, 120—124, 143—144.
Eyvindr skáldaspillir 53, 196.

Falcondress 85.
Fárbauti 11, 124, 186—190, 195, 198, 205.
Faroese ballad 45—49.
Fenrir 10—11, 98, 186—190, 195—197, 199, 208, 218, 223, 275.
Fettered demon 19, 180, 199, 265.
Fímafęng 171—172.
Finn 66, 70, 73, 75, 145—149.
Finnish folktale 111—115.
Finnish magic formulas 94, 152—156, 190—194.
Fire-spirit 228—229.
Fjǫlsvinnsmál 211—212.
Fjǫrgynn 204.
Folkloristic material, value of 5, 19, 118, 239—240.
Folktales and myths 86—90.
Forseti 204.
Fránangr 151, 171.
Fredegar 43.
Freki 197.
Freyja 40, 66—67, 72, 78—85, 125, 128—130.
Freyr 52, 79.
Frigg 40, 79, 170, 174, 176, 216.

Geirrøðr 24, 40, 56—65, 78, 142, 145—149, 296.
Geri 197.
Gering 42, 51, 53.
Geruthus 57.
Giant-builder 65—82.
Gimlé 278.
Gjalp 57, 62, 64.
Gleipnir 98, 287.
Glooskap 256.
Gneip 57.
Goðmǫlugr 97—98.
Golther 13.
Gosforth Cross 180.
Graebner, F. 95.
Gras, E. J. 21, 37—38, 41, 46, 51—55, 62, 83, 92, 95—96, 209, 296.
Grendel 10.
Grerr 130, 132.
Gríðr 63.
Grimm, J. 10, 13, 43, 120.
Grímnismál 93, 189, 193.
Grüner-Nielsen 53.
Gullinborsti 90—93.
Gullveig 79.
Gungnir 90, 92.
Gustr 42.
Gutasaga 119.
Gylfaginning 28, 65, 82, 90, 96.
Gǫndull 130—131.

Hades 92.
Hahn, J. G. von 92.
Hakon the Good 183, 196.
Hákonarmál 196.
Háleygjatal 53.
Hāma 139.
Hamel, A. G. van, 79, 153—154, 171—176, 184.
Haraldr harðráði 57.
Hárbarðsljóð 38, 41.
Háttatal 43.
Haukr Valdísarson 36, 53.
Haustlǫng 23, 37, 39, 59, 134, 136, 150, 186.
Heðinn 130.
Heilbringer 258—265.
Heimdallr 23, 125—129, 133, 138—141, 189, 204, 209.
Hel 16, 19, 170, 186—189, 195, 213—214, 223, 275, 289.
Helblindi 184—190, 192—194.
Hephaistos 10, 272—273.
Herblindi 193.
Hermann, P. 12.
Hermes 263, 270—271, 275, 292.
Herodes 181.

Hervararsaga 39.
Hesiod 33.
Hjaðningavíg 129, 138.
Höckert, R. 72, 78.
Hoffory, J. 49.
Holmberg, U. 136—137.
Hrafnáss 38.
Hreiðmarr 43.
Hrungnir 80—81, 118, 173, 235.
Húsdrápa 23, 125, 128—129, 139, 150, 186.
Hustomten 230.
Hymiskviða 18, 25, 84, 100, 113—115. 120, 195, 291.
— St. 37—38, 96—97.
Hyndluljóð 25, 75, 167, 187, 198, 215—217, 220.
Hǫðr 163, 167—168, 178—179, 192.
Hǫgni Hálfdanarson 130.
Hǫrn 294.
Hœnir 28—30, 35, 37—47, 50, 55, 146, 202, 204, 278.

Iðunn 19, 40, 78, 121, 142—145, 223, 290.
Ildbjørg 243.
Ilja 104—106, 109—110, 113.
Ishtar 164.
Isis 166.
Islendinga drápa 36, 53.
Ithas 269.
Ivalda synir 90.
Ivarr ljómi 129.

Jakob Löj 232.
Jolles, A. 222, 224, 242.
Jónsson, F. 15, 42, 49, 59—60, 95, 126—129, 201—202.
Josselin, de Jong 270.
Jumala 112.
Jummal 105.
Jungner, H. 138, 222.
Jupiter 31.
Jǫrð 61.
Jǫrmungandr 186, 190, 195 (cf. Midgardsserpent).

Kālī 221.
Kennings 38, 43—44, 59—61, 91, 126, 133, 154, 178, 199, 283—284.
Kludde 22, 209.
Kock, E. A. 59—60, 64, 126—127
Kormákr Ogmundarson 38.
Kõu taat 110, 122.
Krappe, A. H. 65, 197, 272—273, 280.
Kreutzwald 102—111, 120, 122.
Krohn, K. 112—114, 152, 157—159, 181, 191, 216, 292.
Kullebonden 232, 247.
Kummer, H. 183.
Kvasir 152—153, 158.

Laakjen 246.
Landtman, G. 234.
Laufey 187—189, 191, 198, 205.
Laxdœlasaga 126.
Leland, C. G. 17.
Lemminkäinen 192, 216.
Leviathan 115.
Leyen, F. v. d. 17, 34, 51, 83, 86—88, 271.
Lijon 110.
Lind, E. H. 119.
Lindqvist, I 60.
Lockanät 155, 227, 236—237.
Locke 229, 236—238 (cf. Loki).
Locke Lewe 249.
Locke Loye 249.
Locknevi 52.
Lodder 22, 52—55, 209.
Loðkona 52.
Lóðurr 28, 30, 35—37, 49—55, 142, 209, 241—242, 249, 278.
Loeke 53—55.
Logaþore 22, 51, 54—55.
Logi 10—11, 14, 17, 83, 160, 162, 207, 241, 296 (cf. Loki).
Lok 47—48 (cf. Loki).
Lokasenna 15, 25, 81, 154, 167—178, 187, 194, 198, 206—207, 215—216, 291.
— st. 23: 213—215.
— st. 27—28: 170, 174—178.
— st. 50: 39.
— st. 54: 97.
Lokemand 226, 232, 247—248. (cf. Loki).
Loki in Baldr-myth 163—179.
— cult of 203—204.
— as culture-hero 16, 17, 20—21, 271—281, 293.

Loki relation to death 12, 16, 19, 211, 213.
— and fertility 16, 166, 223.
— and fire 4, 10—12, 19. 83—84, 151—162, 204—208, 228 233, 244, 280.
— as inventor 153—154, 236.
— and lûkan 10—15, 211, 237—238, 280.
— metamorphoses 66, 77, 85, 155, 206.
— and Othin 20—22, 28—55, 142—144, 173, 201—202, 205, 214, 220, 277, 279, 294.
— in popular tradition 27, 225—250.
— and Ragnarǫk 179—186, 241.
— servant of Thor 16, 18, 21—22, 56—124, 142—144, 151, 201—205.
— as trickster 223—224, 248, 253, 274, 292, 293.
— as vätte 19, 205—207, 214, 232—239.
— and water 141, 156, 208—209 (cf. Locke, Loeke, Logi, Lok, Lokemand, Lokje, Lokke).
Lokje 226—227, 234—235, 246 (cf. Loki)
Lokka táttur 26, 45—48, 142—143, 146.
Lokke 10, 45, 54—55, 151, 225—227, 232, 240—242, 247 (cf. Loki).
Lokke Lagenson 249.
Lokke Leyemand 249.
Longinus 192.
Loorits, O. 102, 104—107, 109—111, 113.
Loptr 11, 49, 58, 205, 211, 213, 241—242.
Louhi 190.
Loveatar 190—193.
Lowie, R. 262.
Loye Langbein 237—238.
Lucifer 12, 14, 198, 211, 246, 250, 272—273. 295.
Lug 272—273, 278, 280—281.
Lukas 232.
Luna 221.
Lundgren 119.
Lyfte-stenen 116, 118.
Lævateinn 211.
Lœðing 98, 287.

MacCulloch 17, 224.
Maia 270.
Mänäbus 256—257, 260, 267, 276.
Marawa 261.
Mars 31.
Mátt ok megin 183—184.
Menglǫð 212.
Meyer, E. H. 4, 12—13, 30, 198.
Meyer, R. M. 13.
Michabous 155.
Midgardsserpent 23, 58, 114—115 120—121, 188—189 (cf. Jǫrmungandr).
Mjǫllnir 71, 90, 92—93, 175.
Mogk, E. 12, 14, 57, 79, 163, 167—169, 204.
Mogue, St. 75.
Moses 117.
Much, R. 11, 12, 135—136, 210.
Müller, Max 289.
Mythological tale 57, 65, 82.

Naata 191.
Nahanarvali 221.
Nál 188—191, 198.
Narfi 186, 188—189, 195, 198.
Nari 188, 195, 205.
Neckel, G. 163—165.
Nerthus 221—222.
Nibelungs 41—44, 46, 150.
Niðavellir 93.
Niflhel 278, 294.
Njǫrðr 79, 215.
Nock 229.
Nordal, S. 78.
Nordendorf, brooch of 22, 51, 54.
Nótt 204.
Nuadu 147.

Óðinn cf. Othin.
Óðr 29, 73, 279.
Ogmios 278.
Ohrt, F. 48, 90, 94, 230.
Olaf, saint, 68.
Olaf Tryggvason 129—130.

Oláfr Geirstaðaálfr 214.
Oláfr pái 23—24, 126.
Olrik, A. 16—22, 27, 38, 45, 53, 99—101, 111—112, 115—124, 142, 180, 192—193, 208, 216, 218, 225, 227—233, 240—241, 247, 265, 271, 275—279, 293.
Óri 212.
Oschophoria 221.
Osiris 166.
Othin 10, 15, 20, 28—29, 79—81, 130—132, 142—144, 150, 173, 179, 181—182, 193—195, 201, 214—216, 276—278, 294 (cf. Loki).

Palmér, J. 31, 49.
Paristaja poeg 107, 110.
Perisokea 190—193.
Persephone 82, 92.
Petersen, N. M. 10.
Philippson 48.
Pikker 122.
Pikne 122—123.
Pipping, R. 66—67, 129, 136, 138.
Prometheus 10—11, 13, 16, 166, 265—270, 272—273.

Qat 34, 261—264.

Radin, P. 32, 89, 289.
Ragnarǫk 37, 168, 177, 179—186, 195, 197, 199, 207, 223, 295.
Rampa 190—191.
Rán 154, 171.
Reginsmál 41—46, 50, 146, 150.
Reinach, S. 269.
Risin og Lokki 26.
Routh, H. V. 32, 184.
Rudbeck 116.
Ruho 190—191.
Rydberg 11.
Rǫgnir 59.

Sacrifice to the fire 225—227, 230—231, 244—245.
— of a tooth 229—230, 243—244.
Sahlgren, J. 52—53.
Salmon 155—161.
Saxo Grammaticus 57, 86, 163, 222.
Schiefner 120.
Schoning, O. 15, 212.
Schröder, F. R. 16, 53, 163, 166, 222.
Schröder, L. von 208, 267.
Schück, H. 16.
Schütte, G. 43.
Setälä, E. N. 190—191.
Seth 165—166.
Sif 80—81, 90—93, 97, 143, 145—147, 224, 291.
Sigrlami 39.
Sigurd 42, 44, 219.
Sigurðardrápa 38.
Sigyn 166, 181, 188—189, 195, 205.
Sindri 93—94, 98.
Singasteinn 125, 127, 129, 133, 135, 139.
Sinmara 211.
Šiva 221.
Skaði 19, 37, 292, 294.
Skáldskaparmál 125, 129.
Skíðblaðnir 90, 92—93.
Sleipnir 66, 74—77, 144, 187, 215—218, 289, 292.
Snorra Edda 38—39, 61, 90, 125.
Snorri 25—28, 43, 57, 62—63, 66, 71—74, 77, 86, 93, 97—98, 128—129, 133, 154, 177, 179, 199, 287—288, 296.
Spirits of the dead 230—231, 244.
Suqe 261.
Suttungr 40.
Svaðilfœri 66, 74—75, 187, 215—216.
Sváfnir 39.
Svafrlami 39.
Svipdagsmál 212.
Sydow, C. W. von 66—67, 71, 74 77, 82—84, 212.
Sijmons, B. 42.
Sægiarn 211.
Sǫrlaþáttr 26, 128—130, 138, 146, 150, 212, 235.

Tagaro 261.
Tawiscara 276.
Thor 11, 23—24, 38—41, 56—124, 142—144, 156, 161, 173, 175, 290—291 (cf. Loki).

Thorkillus 57.
Titeliture 67—68, 74.
Tmesis 126.
Trickster 223—224, 242, 253—271, 290.
Tuatha Dé Danand 280.
Tuisto 220.
Tune, runic stone of 129.
Txä'msem 254—255.
Typhon 272—273.
Týr 197.

Þjalfi 18—19, 58—62, 82—84, 99—101, 115, 117—120, 235.
Þjazi 37—41, 45, 50, 145—150, 199, 202, 290.
Þjelvar 119.
Þjóðólfr Arnórsson 57.
Þjoðolfr ór Hvíni 23, 37, 186.
Þórsdrápa 44, 56—58, 186.
Þrymr 235, 249.
Þrymskviða 18, 25, 40, 64, 80—81, 84—85, 100, 113, 120—121, 133—134, 136, 142, 146, 187, 198, 201, 291.
Þǫkk 170, 177, 217.

Ukkonen 112, 123.
Ulfr Uggason 23, 125, 128, 140, 186.
Ullr 189.
Útgarðaloki 15, 82, 89, 144—149, 156, 162, 207, 213—214, 294—295.

Vaði 12.
Vafþrúðnismál 44.
Vágasker 125, 127, 129, 133, 140.
Váli 179, 189.
Valshamr 40.
Vana isa 122.
Vánargandr 187.
Vanataat 122.
Vanir 29, 73, 78—79.
Varr 212.
Vartari 98, 176, 287.
Vé 79.
Velend 12, 273.
Venus barbata 221.
Viðofnir 211.
Vikramacarita 34.
Vili 79.
Vimur 61, 63, 291.
Vindhlér 125.
Vṛtra 50.
Vulcan 13.
Vǫluspa 25, 66, 71, 76, 93, 166, 187, 283, 295.
— st. 17—18: 28, 29—35, 53.
— st. 22: 79.
— st. 23—24: 80.
— st. 25—26: 71—73, 77—78, 80—82.
— st. 32—34: 167—169.
— st. 35: 168—169.

Walhalla 81, 136.
Wayland cf. Velend.
Weinhold 91.
Wesselski, A. 89, 115.
Wilke, G. 13.
Wisén, Th. 11, 208.
Wod 47—48.
Wodan 55, 280 (cf. Othin).

Yama 221.
Yima 221.
Ymir 201, 221, 277.
Ynglingasaga 79.
Ynglingatal 23, 186.
Yoskeha 276.

Zeus 33, 267—270.
Zrvån 221.

CONTENTS

Ch. I. Methodological Prolegomena 3

Ch. II. Critical Survey of the extant theories 10

Ch. III. Chronological Survey of the sources 23

Ch. IV. Loki and Othin 28
  1. The myth of the creation of mankind .. 28
  2. The myth of Þjazi 37
  3. The introduction of Reginsmál............ 41
  4. The three gods in popular tradition 45
  5. Lóðurr and Loki 49

Ch. V. Loki as the Companion of Thor 56
  1. The tale of Geirrøðr 56
  2. The myth of the giant-builder 65
  3. Other myths of Loki as companion of Thor 82
  4. Loki as Thor's opponent.................. 90
  5. Loki as the servant of the thundergod .. 99
    a. Exposition of Olrik's view 99
    b. The Esthonian tale about the instrument of the thundergod 102
    c. The Finnish tale about the instrument of the thundergod 111
    d. Criticism of Olrik's hypothesis 115

Ch. VI. Loki and the Brísingamen 125
  1. Criticism of the literary sources 125
  2. The myth of the Brísingamen 133

Ch. VII. The Character of Loki in Old-Norse Mythology 142
  1. Loki in his relation to Othin and Thor 142
  2. The double character of Loki 145

Ch. VIII. Loki and the Element of Fire 151
  1. Discussion of the sources 151
  2. The fire-nature of Loki 161

Ch. IX. Loki as the Enemy of the Gods 163
  1. Loki in the myth of Balder's death 163
  2. Loki and the Ragnarok 179
  3. The family of Loki 186
  4. The devilish Loki 198

Ch. X. The Character of Loki 201
  1. Loki's relation to the gods 201
  2. Loki's relation to natural phenomena .. 204
  3. Loki's relation to the underworld........ 210
  4. Loki's bisexual character................ 215
  5. The ethical character of Loki 223

Ch. XI. Loki and Modern Folk-lore 225
  1. Survey of the folkloristic material 225
  2. Olrik's hypothesis about the fire-demon Loki.................................... 227
  3. The hypothesis of Hilding Celander...... 233
  4. The value of the folkloristic material .. 239

Ch. XII. Loki as a religious phenomenon 251
  1. The present state of affairs 251
  2. The trickster of primitive religions...... 254
  3. Greek parallels of Loki 265
  4. Loki as a culture-hero 271

Ch. XIII. Development of the Conception of Loki .. 282

List of Proper Names 299